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FRENCH ARMIES OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

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Dedication

For Joey, the smallest of the smalls – but I doubt for long

Artist's Note

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FRENCH ARMIES OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR 1337–1453

Brass of William Wenemar, a captain and magistrate of Gent, first half of the 14th century. As a senior militia officer of one of the wealthiest cities in Europe he would have the best available military equipment; nevertheless, this still has much in common with that of the late 13th century. (Bijlokemuseum, Gent)

THE PERIOD immediately leading up to the Hundred Years War saw France more prosperous and powerful than it had been since the fall of the Roman Empire. The French kings, like the English, could draw upon more effective 'sinews of war' than any medieval rulers before them. Our study of their armies is aided by the greater volume of documentary evidence concerning recruitment, organisation and payment which survives from this period.

In earlier days French monarchs relied upon the rich region around Paris to finance their wars, but recent urban growth meant that towns throughout the realm became important sources of money and men. On the other hand some cities were flexing their political muscles as centres of semi-autonomous mini-states, most notably in Flanders.

The Hundred Years War played a major role in French history; the country tasted extremes of humiliation and triumph in what was really a sequence of related conflicts, which France finally won. By the time it was over France had changed from a traditional decentralised kingdom where the king was merely 'first amongst equals' into one of the most centralised monarchies in Europe. How much these wars contributed to a process of 'nation-building' is, however, less clear.

Tactically, the Hundred Years War saw the French initially clinging to their own military traditions – and losing – followed by a period in which the English clung to their military traditions – and also lost. Meanwhile the intervals of supposed peace between major Anglo-French clashes were characterised by civil wars, uprisings and widespread devastation by bands of unemployed soldiers. Another feature which has generally been ignored by British historians is a French naval superiority during most of the Hundred Years War. Finally it could be argued that, had it not been for King Charles VI's bouts of paranoid schizophrenia from 1392 onwards, French victories in the late 14th century would have ended the Hundred Years War some fifty years earlier than was eventually the case.

Military attitudes also changed considerably during this period. The knightly elite soon felt itself under threat, not least from an increasingly influential middle class. This resulted in an artificial revival of tournaments, chivalric literature and extravagant behaviour intended to reinforce the distinction between knights and others. At the same time there were those who stopped looking to the past and who tried to embrace new forms of warfare, including Geoffroy de Charny, Christine de Pisan and Jean de Bueil. The latter's *Le Jouvencal*, written in the mid-15th century, showed considerable interest in cannon, and in effective strategy rather than the pursuit of personal glory. Other 15th century treatises focussed on specific weapons, such as the *Art de l'artillerie et canonnage* and the *Art d'archerie*. All these factors contributed

Effigy of a lord of the Château de Bramevaque, first half of the 14th century. He wears an old-fashioned style of armour which persisted in the deep south of France – see Plate A2. *(in situ* Cloisters of the Abbey of St Bertrand de Comminges; author's photo)

Interior of the Porte St Michel at Cahors, a typical example of 14th century urban fortification in south-central France. (Author's photograph)

to the establishment in embryo of a permanent and professional French army by the end of the Hundred Years War.

RECRUITMENT

The army which faced an English invasion of France at the start of the Hundred Years War consisted of feudal contingents, troops recruited under contract, and foreign professionals, all of whom were paid. The feudal structure of France was changing but the kingdom still consisted of a Royal domain, five great Duchies, 47 Counties, several dozen Viscounties, and numerous other fiefs with differing titles. Within this system were hundreds of *chastellainies* consisting of a major castle with its surrounding compact territory; and thousands of lesser *seigneuries*. As a result France had up to 50,000 noble families – the *noblesse* or *chevalerie* – but only a small proportion of these could afford the role of full knighthood, the majority remaining squires.

This probably left France with between 2,350 and 4,000 fighting men of knightly rank. Many squires fought alongside these knights, but for lower pay, and it took many decades for them to achieve a comparable military status. Meanwhile the proportion of knights from the wealthy upper aristocracy rose, and knighthood gradually came to be associated with a hereditary caste claiming privilages such as tax exemption.

Though France still had a general military summons, the *ban* and the *arrière ban* which applied to all male subjects aged from 14 to 60 years, these were virtually abandoned early in the Hundred Years War. Instead the main form of feudal recruitment was the *Semonce des Nobles* directed at those holding fiefs, plus an *arrière ban aprés bataille* which seems to have been used in emergencies. Knights called up under the *Semonce des Nobles* were also paid a daily wage similar to men recruited under contract. Where infantry were concerned the *servitum debitum* had virtually collapsed by the start of the 14th century, and all that remained of rural recruitment was a form of local sergeantry and 'cart service'. Nevertheless, during a widespread collapse of law and order the government did issue an ordnance which allowed peasants to take up arms against brigands – a considerable concession at a time when the offence of *port d'armes* was regarded as a threat to the social order.

The military obligation of those living in towns was, however, increasingly important, and by the 14th century French towns could field small armies of infantry and cavalry. Some of these militias were based upon the city's parishes, each having its own captain

who was often a member of one of the important guilds and might also be of knightly rank. Another method of supplementing the normal feudal array was the *fief rente*, or annuity, but this again fell out of use after 1360.

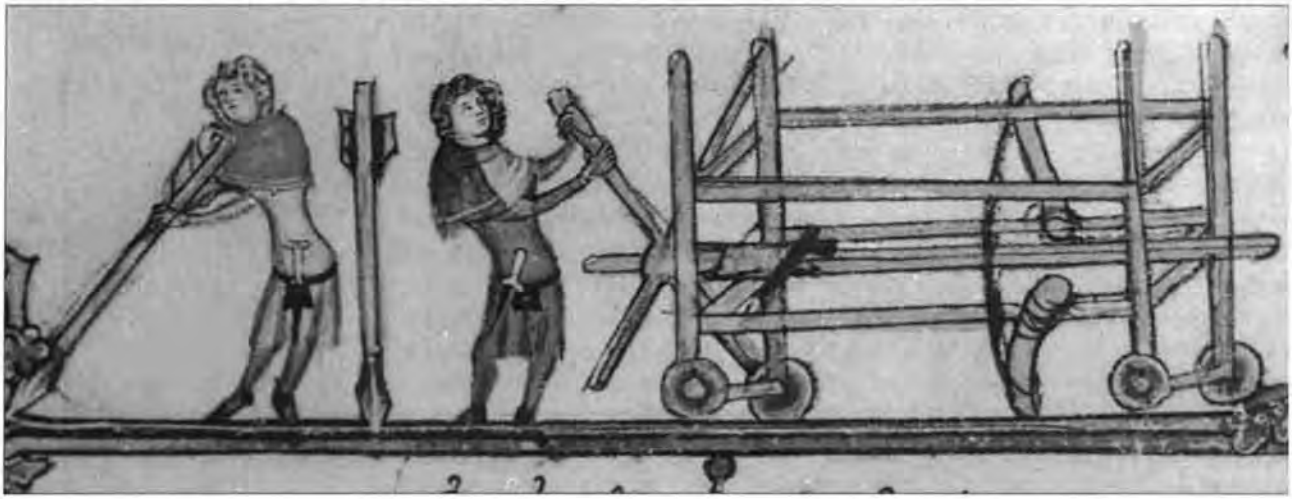
The motivation of aristocratic feudal forces was as traditional as their systems of recruitment; morale, *esprit de corps* and self-identity were maintained though increasingly lavish and elaborate behaviour. Warfare also remained a major route to social and financial advancement, the mystique of the *homme armées* resting on the fact that he or his ancestors had won fame or wealth through their military prowess. The cult heroes of this warlike class included the *Neuf Preux*, the nine most worthy warriors of ancient literature and more recent history – Hector, Alexander, Caesar, Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus, Arthur, Charlemagne and Geoffrey de Bouillon – in addition to the traditional warrior Saints Michael, George and Maurice. By the 15th century contemporary heroes had also been added: the Black Prince, Bertrand du Guesclin, Boucicault, Don Pedro Niño, Jacques de Lalaing and others whose deeds were recorded in chivalric biographies.

Fighting alongside this feudal elite were professional soldiers hired under contact, who were usually from the same social background. Since this contractual system proved much more reliable it soon superceded almost all other forms of recruitment. By 1350 contracts, verbal or written, might govern the hiring of soldiers and household staff, nobles and commoners. The English system of full indenture, incorporating a 'retaining fee', was, however, rarely seen in France. The Company of the Lord of Beaumanoir, contracted by the French king in 1351, may have been typical, consisting of four knights, 18 squires and 30 archers or crossbowmen. Most cavalry in such companies seem to have been members of a minor aristocracy whose fiefs provided them with only meagre incomes, and since warfare was the only proper 'work' for a gentleman many became professional soldiers. Most of their leaders were from the established aristocracy, however, suggesting that the internal structure of these companies reflected feudal society. Nevertheless, some later 14th century company leaders were known only by their places of origin, suggesting that they were of humble or illegitimate birth.

Then there were foreign mercenaries, though in reality this term is misleading because most foreign troops were from states which had especially close relations with the French crown. This would have included the famous Genoese crossbowmen and Castilian fleets. Troops of Imperial origin included the men-at-arms provided by the Bishop of Liège, each man receiving 15,000 *livres* plus 50 *livres* for each day's service. In addition a senior banneret got 40 *sous*, a simple banneret 20, a knight ten and a squire five *sous* in advance for each month's service for as long as required. They agreed to hand their prisoners over to the king, but could keep the captives' horses and armour. If they themselves were captured the French king promised to ransom them, and all horses lost on campaign would similarly be replaced.

The most famous infantry in the French armies during the first decades of the Hundred Years War were, of course, Genoese crossbowmen. In addition there were Genoese foot sergeants, and other Italian *ragacins (ragazzini)* from the Alps who probably served as light

The only surviving original statue of a member of the Gent militia, made around 1340, which once decorated the famous Belfry. These have now been replaced by replicas. (Stonework Museum, St Bavon's Church, Gent)



Men operating an *espringal* in a Flemish manuscript made between 1338 and 1344. This siege engine, shown with a wheeled frame carriage, was powered by twisted skeins of horsehair, and shot massive arrows – though not actually as large as this picture suggests. (Bodleian Library, Ms. Bod. 264, f.201r, Oxford)

infantry. Naval and land forces from the Iberian peninsula helped the French during a Breton campaign of 1342, while fifteen years later Charles of Navarre sent 224 men-at-arms and 1,120 infantrymen by sea to Normandy.

Leadership

Between the Truce of Bretigny in 1360 and the close of the 14th century, a steady series of French counter-offensives was led by commanders who were mostly drawn from the traditional aristocratic elite, though they also included men of obscure lineage. Of over 1,600 men paid by the French government to command military units, less than 350 appear more than a few times. Of these about 180 were prominent enough to be regarded as a 'Royal officer corps' and these were the true military aristocracy of later 14th century France. Most came from Normandy, Brittany, western France and the Paris region.

The nobility of the north and west had, in fact, been hostile to the ruling Valois family until a reconciliation between these clans and the Valois enabled French forces to expel the English from all but a handful of coastal towns by the end of the century. But following the death of Charles V in 1380 the gradual alienation of such men divided France into what became known as the Armagnac and Burgundian factions, and permitted the English again to occupy over half the country after the battle of Agincourt.

At a time when, according to most historians, a sense of French national identity was being forged though prolonged conflict with England, regional identities remained powerful. This was particularly true in Brittany, where use of a Celtic language remained strong even amongst the feudal elite. Within the even more powerful Duchy of Burgundy the *noblesse* or military aristocracy came to regard itself as having a higher status than that of any other land. Here newly enobled men, even those who had earned their rank through successful military careers, were expected to remain 'humble' in the presence of those boasting four generations of noble ancestors. In such a society loyalty, noble obligation and the pursuit of personal honour remained paramount – which in turn led to an emphasis on individual close combat.

French kings during the Hundred Years War

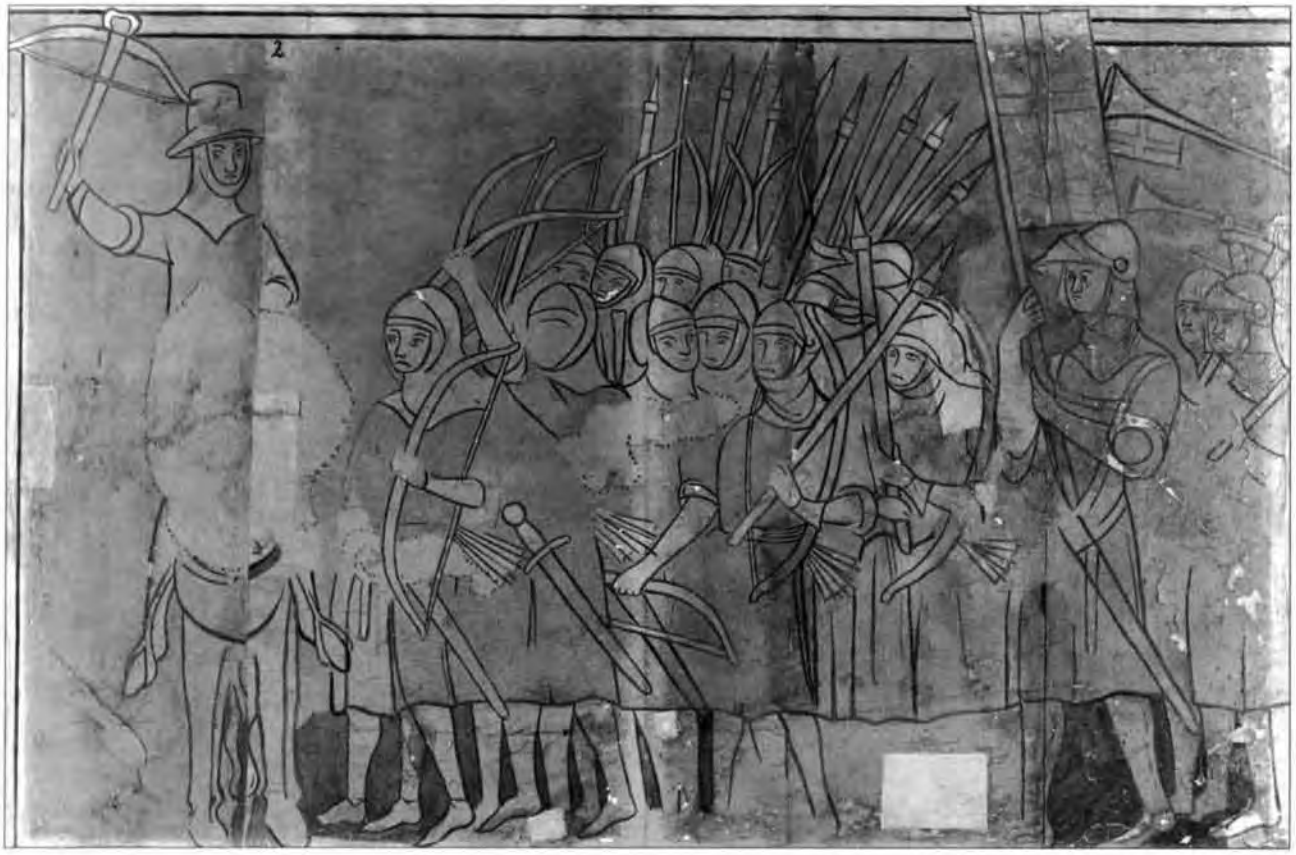
Philip VI de Valois (1328-1350)
John II The Good (1350-1364)
Charles V The Wise (1364-1380)
Charles VI The Mad (1380-1422)
Charles VII The Well-Served (1422-1461)

Much of the heroism of the knightly elite was, in fact, focussed on tournaments and quixotic feats of arms rather than real battles. In 1369 Eustache Deschamps complained that *'Soldiers destroy the country through pillage, all honour is gone, they like to be called gens d'armes but they roam the country, destroying everything in their way, and the poor people are forced to flee before them. If the soldier manages to travel three leagues in a day he thinks he has done well.'* By the close of the 14th century Deschamps was also complaining about the knights' lack of training, idleness, desire for good wine and fine clothes, and the fact that boys of ten to twelve were knighted long before they had earned such rank on the battlefield.

Hired companies

In general, those men directly involved in the struggle against the English took a more practical attitude towards warfare. Many swore 'brotherhood of arms' with various colleagues. These could be contracts of service or of mutual support, either for a specified period or for life, and sometimes included agreement to share both information and profits from ransoms. Several Brotherhoods might establish Alliances or chains of obligation, sometimes resulting in military *compagnies* of *routiers* with a corporate name and badge.

Such companies or *routes* might then be recruited by *lettres de retenue*, by which the king or his lieutenant 'retained' a captain with a specified contingent in return for a specific sum of money. But since a time limit was rarely mentioned in these contracts, the companies were generally free to go elsewhere after as little as two months' service. This made it difficult for



A 19th century facsimile of a lost wall painting from the Leugemeete in Gent. These illustrate units of the city's militia, here armed with crossbows, ordinary bows, swords, and a pointed form of mace or club called a *goedendag*. Note the uniform appearance of the clothing of this company. (Photo Studio Claerhout, Gent)

Archers with longbows in a Flemish manuscript of 1338-44; note the arrows carried in their belts. The bowmen of England were by no means the only ones to use longbows, but in most parts of western Europe archery was practised more for hunting than warfare. (*Romance of Alexander*, Bodleian Library, Ms. Bod. 264, Oxford)

the crown to maintain control, to ensure that commanders kept their companies up to strength and adequately equipped, or even that they passed on the pay to their men.

During the second half of the 14th century the crown also enlisted smaller companies, some of which were little better than bands of outlaws. An example may have been the contract with Lorent Coupe-Gorge ('Cut-throat Larry') and his five squires. This rather haphazard system of contractual recruitment continued well into the 15th century, though the crown was also demanding relatively small and properly equipped 'feudal' contingents from selected towns.

Among the foreign troops, Genoese crossbowmen still featured prominently and their commanders included men of considerable experience. For example, Conrart Grimaldi had served in Italy before signing up with the French between 1370 and 1395; Odet d'Ansart was a squire from 'the territory of Genoa' and became a *constable* of 19 mounted crossbowmen. The crossbowmen themselves came from an even wider area, and not only Italy. Such men could find themselves serving in unlikely places, and they were probably amongst the 500 crossbowmen taken by Admiral de Vienne to Scotland in 1384.

Other foreign troops included Spaniards and, more surprising, a handful of Muslims from Navarre. Amongst the latter was Ibrahim Maexa who, in the late 14th century, spent six years as a Royal blacksmith in the castle of Cherbourg. Perhaps he arrived with the Navarrese army which had campaigned in Brittany?

'The Order of the Star at Table', in a late 14th century French manuscript. The Order of the Star was founded at almost the same time as the English Order of the Garter, but did not survive long – most of its members were killed in the early battles of the Hundred Years War. (*Grandes Chroniques de France*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 2813, f.394, Paris)

The consequences of failure

The disasters which France suffered after the battle of Agincourt had a profound impact on its military systems. In the short term

they led to even more criticism of a knightly class which had failed the country; commentators like Alain Chartier even doubted the value of chivalry itself. In his *Tree of Battles* Honoré Bonet similarly complained that the knights regarded war merely as a means of winning wealth. Comparable criticisms were contained in Jean de Bueil's manual of knighhood called *Le Jouvencal*, written in the mid-15th century. This was based on his own experience and was modern in its emphasis on military professionalism above all other considerations. Nevertheless knighthood retained its mystique, though the men-at-arms may now have included more squires than knights.

Several leaders of 15th century companies – *ecorcheurs* or 'scorchers' as they were now often known, in reference to the effect of their passage on the tortured countryside – were of relatively humble origins. There were also many similarities between those *ecorcheurs* who caused such widespread suffering in mid-15th century France and the troublesome companies of the mid-14th century. There seem to have been three sorts of people involved: unemployed soldiers – including Englishmen – who were a menace to everyone; brigands based in the forests who tended to rob all and sundry; and groups of peasants who occasionally joined the brigands. Their activities were prompted by the same lack of military employment and a breakdown in law-and-order. The main differences from the 14th century were that the *ecorcheurs* never had Crusades launched against them, and many of their leaders were ex-Royal commanders who were subsequently reintegrated into the French military system.

Feudal recruitment might have disappeared for cavalry but it persisted for infantry. In fact King Charles VII revived feudal recruitment in a new guise to create a large and reliable infantry force under Royal control, transforming the old urban levies into the new *francs archers*. In 1448 and again in 1451 Charles issued ordnances to the effect that every 50 households should provide an archer and a crossbowman, selected by the local authorities from men of good reputation, effective military age, robust physique and skill with weapons.

Motivation could be mixed, most troops still fighting largely for pay or the hope of booty, while ransoms remained a major motive and a major fear amongst their leaders. In fact a trade developed in which middle-men bought and sold prisoners along with the rights to their ransoms. Sometimes this was done individually, at other times almost in bulk; for instance, the Florentine merchant John Vittore specialised in such brokerage, and in 1417 purchased a large number of English captives from the Archbishop of Rouen.

Despite the English occupation of half the country, foreign troops could still be found in French armies, even amongst the followers of Jeanne d'Arc. The army she led from Sully against the English collected a strange mixture of fighting men along the way, including a contingent commanded by the Scotsman Hugh de Kennedy and Italians under Barthelemy Baretta.

This late 14th century image reminds us of the huge quantities of arms, armour and munitions which were manufactured for the competing armies; documentary evidence shows that this was often on an almost modern production-line scale. Note also the separated-leg hose worn rolled down to the knee by the soldier on the right. (*Chroniques de St Denis*, British Library, Ms. Roy. 20, C.VII, London)

The role played by a 'popular resistance' against English rule in Normandy is still a matter of debate. Yet there was undoubtedly widespread antagonism to the English occupation, reflected in a popular song which sounded like a humourous call to arms: *'Among you, people of the village, who love the French king, take good heart, to fight the English. Let each take his hoe, the better to uproot them. And if they do not wish to go, at least make a face at them. Do not fear to strike them, those big bellied God-Damns, for one of us is worth four of them, or at least he is worth three of them.'*

ORGANISATION

Following a hard-fought war against Flemish rebels early in the 14th century, King Philip V reorganised his army in 1317. Above all he wished to ensure Royal control over the appointment of military and regional commanders. At the same time French field armies continued to have from three to four times as many infantry as cavalry. There was another more general shake-up in 1351, in the face of an expected English invasion, when the King issued a new *Reglement pour les Gens de Guerre* fixing 25 as the minimum number of men-at-arms a *chevetaine* or captain could lead under his banner. A new scale of wages was also introduced for such companies who would, in turn, be reviewed every two months by the Marshal's clerks.

Later the same year King John created the Order of the Star, a secular or monarchical order comparable to the rival English Order of the Garter, to serve as an elite group around which an army could be built. In the event the disasters of the first phase of the Hundred Years War meant that the Order of the Star had a very short history, many of its members being killed at Mauron in 1352 while most of the rest died at Poitiers four years later.

Like his predecessors, John continued to summon barons and members of the lesser nobility to advise him, while the seven great princes or Peers of France formed the king's *Conseil Secret* – to which lesser nobles were invited when required. In purely military terms the most senior officer was the Constable of France, who commanded in the king's absence and also supervised spies and scouts, but had to account for all his actions to the king's clerks. The Marshal's main duty was to maintain discipline and ensure sufficient military supplies between the major campaigns.

The indentured military companies often had their own names, such as the *Compagnie de la Fortune,*

Tristan slays a rival in part of *The Story of Tristan and Iseult* on a series of mid- to late 14th century southern French wall paintings. Note the 'fan' crests – both men and horses have the old-fashioned military equipment which seems to have persisted in isolated regions of France such as the Auvergne. At right centre, the colour contrast shows clearly the straps and padded leather squab on the inside surface of the shield. (*in situ* Templer Chapel of the Castle, St Floret; author's photo)

Compagnie de Margote and *Compagnie Blanche*. Their victims tended to identify them merely as English, Bretons or whatever, while those without noble commanders were sometimes called 'headless companies' and were particularly feared as being outside the normal structure of society.

Captains of urban militia were appointed by the city or town; two or three would normally accompany the militia on campaign. Whereas militia captains tended to be paid annually, members of the nobility who attended muster were paid by the marshals according to how many days they served. Military expenditure could clearly be considerable, and at the start of the Hundred Years War the king's *hôtel* or personal retinue alone cost 30,000 *livres tournois*.

King John's reforms largely failed, but they remained the basis of more successful efforts by his successors. In 1374 a Royal ordnance established something akin to a central military 'staff', enabling the Royal Constable to appoint a lieutenant and the Royal Marshals to appoint four lieutentants to review the troops once mustered. The only troops not liable for such inspection were the households of the Constable and the Master of the Crossbowmen – the latter being, in effect, commander of all French infantry.

Beneath these senior officers each captain of a company had a Royal letter of authority and would, theoretically, command 100 men. Captains were also responsible for bringing their men to muster and accounting for their conduct. At muster each man, his kit and his horse were inspected; only if these were in order would a man be paid and 'retained'. Leave was only granted for good reasons, but a man could not be replaced unless dismissed by his captain, summoned directly into the king's service, or was wounded or sick. Payment was made through the *chambres* or subdivisions of a *compagnie* or *route*, the captain receiving money for his own immediate household while the rest went straight to his men.

Such an army was, of course, very expensive; and in 1379 and 1384 a violent reaction against the necessary taxes meant that this new structure was abandoned for many years. In fact the entire system had collapsed by 1417-18, by which time the English were overrunning great swathes of France. French military organisation at the time of Agincourt was theoretically the same as it had been during the militarily

Archers and men-at-arms attacking a castle in a mid- to late 14th century French manuscript. The archers are relatively well armoured while the men-at-arms have visored bascinets. (*Chroniques de St Denis*, British Library, Ms. Roy. 20, C.VII, f.13v, London)

successful decades of the later 14th century. Armies consisted of companies recruited by *lettres de retenue*, supported by similarly professional crossbow-armed infantry and by militia units from selected towns. Local infantry also tended to flock to the colours to protect their own region. Meanwhile parallel military structures had developed in autonomous duchies such as Brittany and Burgundy.

Symbols and livery

One of King John's ideas which was not revived was that of secular military orders as a focus of loyalty. His successor Charles V had little interest in chivalry, while Charles VI developed other methods of cementing loyalty. Meanwhile there was a slow movement towards some form of 'national' military insignia. At the start of the Hundred Years War insignia were still strictly feudal; but only a few years later Jean, Comte d'Armagnac, ordered all nobles and their followers to wear a white cross on their clothes. This white cross was again mentioned later in the 14th century, and was worn by French Royalist forces against the Burgundians in 1414. It appeared even more frequently by the mid-15th century, when it was contrasted with the red cross of the English and the black cross of the Bretons. In the 1370s the long-established emblem of the French Royal family, the *fleurs-de-lys*, was reduced to three flowers (the arms of 'France modern') instead of the previous scattering of many across a shield or banner.

Another very important ensign was the *oriflamme*, a plain blood-red banner which served as the almost sacred flag of France itself.

ABOVE LEFT **Early 14th century French sword (Daehnhardt Coll.)**
ABOVE **14th century French knife (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg)**
LEFT **Mid-15th century Italian sword (Sullivan Coll.)**

It was kept, together with Royal banners, in Reims cathedral, and was used only in defence of the kingdom, the Church or the Christian faith.

Other sorts of identification included 4,200 black pennons bearing the word *Justice* in silver or gold, distributed by the Dauphin Charles to his men during a civil war against the Duke of Burgundy in 1411. Other banners used by the Dauphin's forces included a flag bearing a dolphin, another bearing a fully armoured St Michael killing a serpent, and a third with an armoured saint holding a naked sword.

As yet no 'uniforms' existed, but the Royal court made increasing use of distinctive clothing for specific groups of servants or retainers. For example, the sergeants at arms often wore blue and black during the reign of Charles V. In 1382 Charles VI introduced a new system to create a sense of comradeship amongst his followers. Every member of the *Compagnie du Roy* from the king down to the humblest servant, including women, had to dress in particular costumes, colours and devices, with the king and his councillors deciding at what point in each year these liveries would change.

Most livery devices reflected the current political situation. The most important such badges included the winged stag used by Charles VI before 1388, and the *geneste* (broom plant) associated with the Marmousettes faction towards the end of his reign and inherited by Charles VII. The badges worn by ordinary retainers were of base metal whereas those worn by senior men were usually of enamelled silver or gold.

French soldiers killing *Jaquerie* rebels. The latter are shown in middle-class costume rather than as poverty-stricken peasants. The soldiers are also well equipped, wearing a variety of helmets including one covered in scales. (*Chroniques de St Denis*, British Library, Ms. Roy. 20, C.VII, f.133, London)

Beyond court circles costume and badges were also used to show allegiance. For example, in Paris in 1375 many people adopted hoods halved red and blue as a mark of allegiance to Etienne Marcel, a political leader demanding widespread reform. In 1411 another Parisian group, the Cabochiens, adopted blue hats, and two years later their rivals took to wearing white hats. At other times those sympathetic to the Burgundian faction wore their *cornettes* or caps pulled to the right, the pro-Armagnacs to the left.

Financial weakness was the main reason why the French crown could not gather sufficient forces to resist the English following the battle of Agincourt. Similarly the treaty which reconciled King Charles

'The Militia of Paris', in a late 14th century French manuscript. The infantry levy has been given an almost uniform appearance which was to some extent true – much of their equipment was provided by the city, purchased in bulk from manufacturers. (*Grandes Chroniques de France*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 2813, Paris)

VII and the Duke Burgundy in 1435 meant that the crown could once again gather the *taille* taxes, rebuild an effective army, and tame the troublesome *ecorcheurs*.

Charles VII's reforms

Finally, on 5 January 1445, the creation of the Royal *compagnies d'ordonnances* was announced. There would be 15 of these, each of 100 lances; each lance consisted of six men (a man-at-arms, his sword-bearer, page, two archers and a *varlet* or military servant). These new forces were in action against English-held Caen in 1459, where the Royal contingents alone included 11,700 men-at-arms and 6,000 *francs archers*.

The infantry *francs archers* were established after the cavalry *compagnies d'ordonnance* and their structure was simpler. Men were expected to live at home, were inspected regularly, and practised archery every religious feast day. They were supposed to have suitable armour but if they were too poor this could be supplied by their parish. On active service they were paid four francs a month and were exempt from the *taille* tax. Nevertheless, there were fewer than 8,000 such *francs archers* during the reign of Charles VII.

As might be expected, banners and even costumes were similarly modernised. Although the 'free archers' had no uniform as such, the archers of the Royal Guard in 1449 were dressed in blue, white and red, or green, white and red. That year Charles VII entered Rouen in triumph, accompanied by the 600 men of his own 'battle' or cavalry unit, each having a spear with a pennon of red satin with a gold sun.

ARMOUR & WEAPONS

Armour in France was less varied than in Italy or Germany. Large amounts of mail rather than plate were still worn in the 1330s, and consequently much of the French cavalry at Crécy and Poitiers would have been highly vulnerable to English arrows. On the other hand many knights had abundant equipment. The will of Bertrand de Montibus, a French knight in 1327, included five armours, a *manche de fer* arm protection, five warhorses and four riding horses. Nine years later the equipment expected of a mounted vassal in Hainault, a French-speaking province just on the Imperial side of the frontier, was a mail *hauberk* or smaller *haubergeon*, mail *chausses* for the legs, plus a mail *coif* or *barbière* for the neck, and mail gauntlets.

An interesting text describing the arming of a knight shortly before the Hundred Years War would probably still have applied to many Frenchmen. The knight began by putting a shirt over his breeches and combing his hair; then putting on leather shoes and hose. The first

pieces of armour were thigh and knee protections of iron or hardened leather, followed by a padded *aketon* jacket, mail *hauberk* and mail *coif*. Next came a 'coat-of-plates' (a defence made of several butted plates attached to a poncho-like fabric garment) and *gorgeres* or throat defences; a surcoat displaying his coat-of-arms; whalebone gauntlets, sword belt, sword, axe and dagger. Lastly he donned a heavy helm or lighter bascinet. Shields were, however, now rarely carried in war.

The arms and armour of ordinary part-time urban militiamen could be of varied quality, sometimes being several generations old, while simple items like small buckler shields of willow or poplar were probably made locally. Crossbowmen tended to wear more armour than longbowmen, their main role being in siege warfare. For example, the full equipment issued to a crossbowman named Jeran Quesnel at the Clos de Galées in Rouen in 1340 consisted of a coat-of-plates, a *corsset* perhaps of mail to wear below the plates, *bras de plate* for his arms and a *gorgière de plate* for his neck.

The Clos de Galées in Rouen manufactured *espringal* siege engines, arms and armour as well as ships, but the best crossbows came from Toulouse in the south. By the start of the Hundred Years War Toulouse also manufactured silk-covered and plain quilted *cottes gamboisées*, plate armour for men and horses, bascinets, helms, brimmed helmets called *chapeaux de Montauban*, gauntlets and assorted shields (plain white or ready painted with the arms of France). Amongst less common items were *couteaux* daggers, lances, *dards* javelins, *haches norroises* (known in England as Danish axes), crossbows, *garrocs* for spanning crossbows, plus huge quantities of crossbow bolts delivered in iron-bound chests. The first clear reference to the proofing or testing of armour in France is found in another document from Rouen dated 1340.

The pressures of war may have accounted for the appearance of other styles of armour in the inventory of the Clos de Galées, including the canvas-covered *plates de Gênes* ('of Genoa' or 'in Genoese style'), *bassinets de Gênes*, and canvas-covered *gorgières de fer* mentioned in 1347. Meanwhile the *hauberk* generally lost its integral mitten and coif while the sleeves and hem were also reduced until it became a smaller *haubergeon*. The coat-of-plates had already evolved, probably from an earlier leather *cuirie*, and by the mid-14th century the old girdle-like type may already have been regarded as old-fashioned – although a French doc-ument of 1337 did mention a coat-of-plates lacking its usual fabric covering and being attached to a leather backing.

The Horsemen of the Apocalypse on a French tapestry made between 1375 and 1390. All except one figure – who is shown as a stylised Oriental – are given normal French arms and armour of the period. The foreground rider clearly wears a mail haubergeon over his cuirass or brigandine, with plate limb defences; note also his shield – cf.Plate A3. (Castle Museum, Angers)

The battle of Auray (1364), like so many of the later clashes of the 14th century, was largely fought by heavily armoured knights and squires. Here Bertrand du Guesclin (centre left) – who was captured at Auray by Sir John Chandos – is depicted wearing a tabard bearing his coat-of-arms, but both armies fight beneath the banner of Brittany in what was, in effect, a civil war. (*Du Guesclin Chronicles*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

At first limb defences had usually been made of strips of hardened leather and metal. In 1340, however, the Clos de Galèes records mentioned a *bras de plates* for the first time. A plate *bevor* to reinforce the mail *aventail* of a bascinet helmet was widespread from the 1330s, and one of the first French references to a *gorgerette* was dated 1337. That year also saw the last mention of a *helm* in the archives of the Clos de Galées; a few of these heavy, old-fashioned helmets had previously been listed amongst a ship's equipment. Thereafter lighter helmets were worn, mostly commonly the bascinet which was first mentioned in these archives in 1336. Such bascinets could, however, vary from a small round form to a simple open-faced helmet or one with a removeable visor.

Changes to weaponry were much less dramatic and the only ones to see major improvements were crossbows and guns. The crossbow has been strongly criticised because of the supposed battlefield superiority of the English longbow. Yet the crossbow was primarily used by infantry in siege warfare – and the Hundred Years War was primarily a war of sieges. Despite its relative slowness of spanning, loading and shooting, the power and accuracy of the crossbow has rarely been doubted. It could penetrate most armour at close range, and its accuracy was enhanced by use of the *vireton* or 'spinning' bolt.

The first mention of firearms in France was in 1338. The city of Lille had its own *maistre de tonnoire* in charge of guns in 1341, and in 1345 there was a Royal artilleryman in Toulouse. Cannon were also used to great effect in the defence of the castle of Bioule in 1346-47 under the auspices of Huges de Cardaillac. Large arrow-like missiles were shot from some of these first cannon, though the normal ammunition was lead or iron cannonballs. Oddly enough these declined in favour of stone missiles for a while before large iron cannonballs reappeared early in the 15th century.

Changes in civilian costume had a major impact on the appearance of armour. The most dramatic change in male costume was the adoption of a short tunic from around 1340, instead of the earlier flowing robe. More peculiar, perhaps, was the adoption of flared hips, puffed

OPPOSITE **'Bertrand du Guesclin appointed Constable of France', in an early 15th century French manuscript. King Charles V gives a hand-and-a-half sword to France's toughest and most successful soldier in 1370, making him commander of all French forces under the king himself. Du Guesclin (1323-80) survived many battles against English, French, Breton, Navarrese and Castilian armies, and was captured and ransomed several times. It was he who presided over the patient campaign of containment and siege warfare which so weakened the English position in France in the 1370s, and he also laid some of the foundations for French military reforms. The artist depicts him here 'warts and all' – his equally unsparing tomb effigy shows that his looks did not match his prowess. (British Library, Ms. Sloane 2433A, f.220v, London)**

shoulders and padded chests; while even belts, including sword belts, came to be worn low on the hips in a fashion previously associated with female costume. A military version of the padded *jupon* jacket was also worn over armour. The narrow waist which characterised armours such as the brigandine, *jaque* and plate cuirass reflected such civilian fashion, this 'wasp' waist remaining a feature of armour throughout the 15th century.

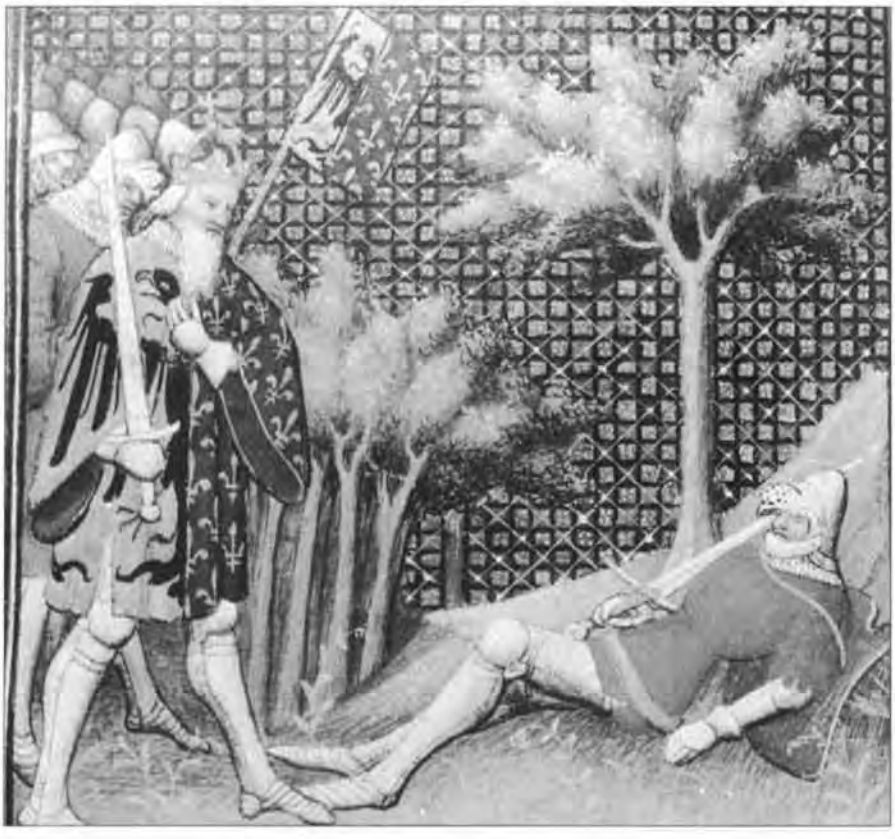
During the second half of the 14th century the iron plates of a full armour became larger and fewer until, by c.1400, the great period of 'white armour' had been reached. This term indicated that it was made entirely of iron plates, though these need not necessarily have been worn uncovered. The best complete 'white harness' had to be made to the measurements of one particular individual and could rarely be worn by

anyone else. The best armours were probably imported from Italy, and Italian armour also influenced that made in France.

It was not the weight of full plate armours which caused problems on the battlefield, since such an armour weighed about the same as a modern infantryman's equipment and pack. The real problems were heat exhaustion, and limited visibility when the visor was worn closed. A list of a complete *harnois a armer homme* written in 1384 included a large, long and 'sufficient' *cote de fer bonne* weighing at least 25 pounds, good *avant-bras* and *gantelets* for the arms and hands, the full set costing 16 *livres tournois.* In addition he should have good and 'well sufficient' *paires de harnois de jambes* for his legs, each with mail protection at the back, at 5½ *livres tournois* a pair. Another document adds a bascinet and visor with a *camail* (aventail) 'in the new fashion', such bascinets costing 2 to 3 *livres tournois.* This made a total cost of 25 *livres tournois.*

Full armour had changed slightly by the 1410s when Charles, Duke of Orléans, distributed lighter equipment to his men-at-arms and squires: *bascinets à bavière,* which were probably 'great bascinets' with integral bevors, *pieces d'allemagne* which were probably breastplates, *cuisses* consisting of pieces of plate for the legs, *brasselles, garde bras* and mail gauntlets for the arms and hands. Much of this was covered in black satin fabric.

Infantry armour was lighter, less abundant and cheaper. We read that in 1372 Libert Borrein, a middle-class militiaman from what is now Belgium, had a mail hauberk with a *colletin* additional collar and shoulder protection, a bascinet with a visor and aventail, plated gauntlets, plus arm and leg defences made of hardened leather. Around the same time the crossbowmen and *pavesiers* of Provençe, far to the south, were expected to have a *cervellière* or a bascinet helmet, and *plates* (coat-of-plates) often with a *gipponus* (padded *jupon*) or *pansière* (small mail hauberk). Many had plate *faudes* attached to the *pansière,* plus a plate *braconnière* or mail *gorgière* to protect the neck. Only a few had *gantelets, ghants, manicae* or *brasales* for their hands and lower arms.

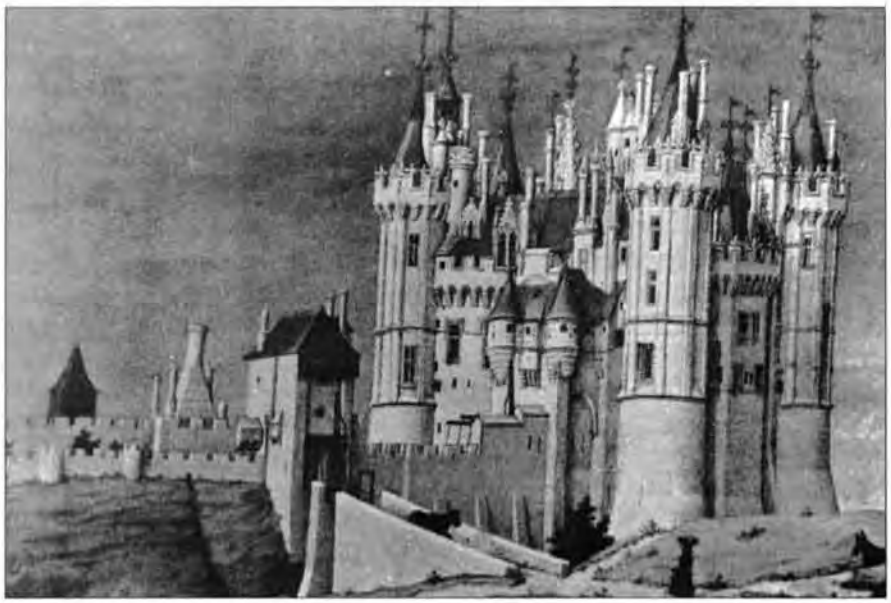


'Charlemagne finds the body of Roland', in an early 15th century French manuscript. Here the heroic Roland is shown as a French knight with the most up-to-date armour, including the new rounded visor and a bevor plate attached to his bascinet. (*Chroniques de St Denis*, Louvre Museum, Paris)

A French crossbowman's weapons consisted of a crossbow, a relatively light *ensis* or *spata* sword and a *couteau* dagger, while some also carried a *bloquerium* small shield or buckler. Those of a *pavesier* were a spear and dagger, plus the

large *pavise* shield or mantlet, very few having a sword. Provençal '*brigand*' light infantry again had a cervellière, bascinet or *capellus ferreus* (brimmed war hat or 'kettle hat'), and the few who had body armour wore a *jaque* or a *cota* or *malha* of mail. They did not normally have shields because they were light infantry skirmishers.

The best recorded, and perhaps one of the most important of French arms manufacturing centres was the Clos de Galées at Rouen. It made military equipment in very large quantities and kept even more in a reserve. In 1376, for example, there were over one thousand armours in the Chambre de la Reine alone, although these were described as old-fashioned and of poor quality. Eight years later a substantial order from the king requested *avant bras, bassinets* (the most common type of helmet), *boucliers, bracelets, bras de plate, chapeaux de fer, cottes, cuissots, ecus, ecussons, gantelots, garde-brass, gorgerettes, gorgières, harnois, haubergiers, heaumes, hoquetons, hourratières, jacques, pavois, plates, poulains* and *targes*, each *paires de harnois* weighing at least 25 pounds, each *bassinet* weighing at least 4 pounds.



The Royal castle of Saumur as it appeared around 1415. Though the height and pointed character of the architecture may have been exaggerated, the picture is essentially accurate. It also includes the large number of chimneys necessary in a château which was now expected to be warm and comfortable as well as strong. (*Trés Riches Heures de Duc de Berry*, Musée Condé, Paris)

A second order in 1384 allocated no less than 17,200 gold francs for the manufacture of 200,000 crossbow bolts, for repairing all existing armours, horse harness and artillery, and for buying new equipment. Clearly war was as relatively expensive a business then as it is now.

Some armourers and arms merchants made arrangements with colleagues abroad, as in 1375 when Guitard de Junqiyères, an armourer of Bordeax, agreed with Lambert Braque, an armourer in Germany, to co-operate in supplying the Lord of Foix's castle of Morlaas with 60 bascinets and *cotes de fer*. The most detailed evidence is found in the remarkable archives of Datini, a merchant from Prato in Italy, who was a key figure in an arms trade based at Avignon in the later 14th century. This was a major distribution centre, not only for new arms and armour but for second-hand and captured equipment as well as raw materials.

As far as specific items of armour were concerned, a separate or larger plate to protect the chest in a coat-of-plates had appeared by the middle of the century. Within a relatively short time this chest plate fused with the abdomen plates to form a true breastplate, which in turn gradually replaced the old coat-of-plates. By the end of the 14th century it was attached to laminated *faulds* protecting abdomen and groin, often with a similar backplate and skirt, the whole ensemble being hinged down one side and buckled down the other. It had, in fact, evolved into a full 'white armour' cuirass.

Other, lighter forms of body armour were also replacing the old coat-of-plates. These included the brigandine and the *jaque* or *jacques* (English 'jack'). The semi-rigid brigandine normally consisted of many small overlapping iron scales rivetted to each other and to the inside of a sturdy canvas sleeveless doublet, with an outer covering of finer decorative cloth. Some later 14th and 15th century brigandines incorporated a larger chest element, often in the form of two L-shaped plates fastened down the front, and from the mid-15th century onwards some also had a substantial back piece.

The jack was a cheaper 'soft' armour which seems at first to have been a strengthened *pourpoint* or quilted jacket, 'stuffed' with rags or made from many layers of cloth – up to 30 in some cases. No less than 1,100 *jaques de fustaine* (canvas) were ordered from Paris in 1385. Although jacks remained the armour of common soldiers, they could have a coloured outer layer with decorative tufts of thread where the stitching intersected. Other 15th century jacks were reinforced with mail or incorporated internal scales of iron or horn; some long-sleeved examples had large-link chains attached down the outer arm as protection against cuts.

Developments in protection for the limbs tended to be less dramatic, though more sophisticated. Plate armour for the arms became visible before that for the legs, probably because the latter was at first worn inside mail *chausses*. Full plate iron leg harness started to appear in France around 1370 – roughly the same time as elsewhere.

The bascinet was the most common helmet amongst 14th century French men-at-arms. It came in various forms, the most widespread having a conical or latterly a rounded *visière* visor with eye slits and numerous ventilation holes. The mail aventail was often called a *camail*, while the *hourson* was probably a leather lining. An additional semi-rigid or rigid bevor could be added to the aventail, but was subsequently riveted directly to the bascinet to form a 'great bascinet'. Another form of light helmet apparently reached France from Italy in around 1410. This was the *salet*, which could also have a small visor. Meanwhile the old *chapeau de fer* or brimmed helmet remained popular amongst some foot soldiers.

Given the threat from English longbowmen, it is not surprising that the 14th century saw considerable development in horse armour. Early *chamfrons* covered only the front of the horse's head, though some had an extended *pol* at the back. New forms which appeared later in the 14th century were larger, covering not only the back of the head but having a bulbous projection over the nose and pierced cups covering the eyes. The increasing necessity for men-at-arms to fight on foot led to some abandonment of the shortened infantry spear in favour of the fearsome 15th century poleaxe, with a heavy shaft partly protected by iron extensions from a head which united a blade, a war-hammer and a spike.

The anonymous *Du Costume Militaire des Français en 1446* provides exceptionally detailed information about the equipment of a *lance*, the basic cavalry unit: *'Firstly the said men-at-arms are commonly decked, when they go to war, in entire white harness. That is to say close cuirass, vambraces, large garde-braces, leg harness, gauntlets, salet with visor and a small bevor which covers only the chin. Each is armed with a lance and a long light sword, a sharp dagger hanging on the left side of the saddle, and a mace. Each man must also be*

A complete Italian armour made c.1460, in a style which suggests that it was made for export, either to France or to Germany. (De Dino Coll.)

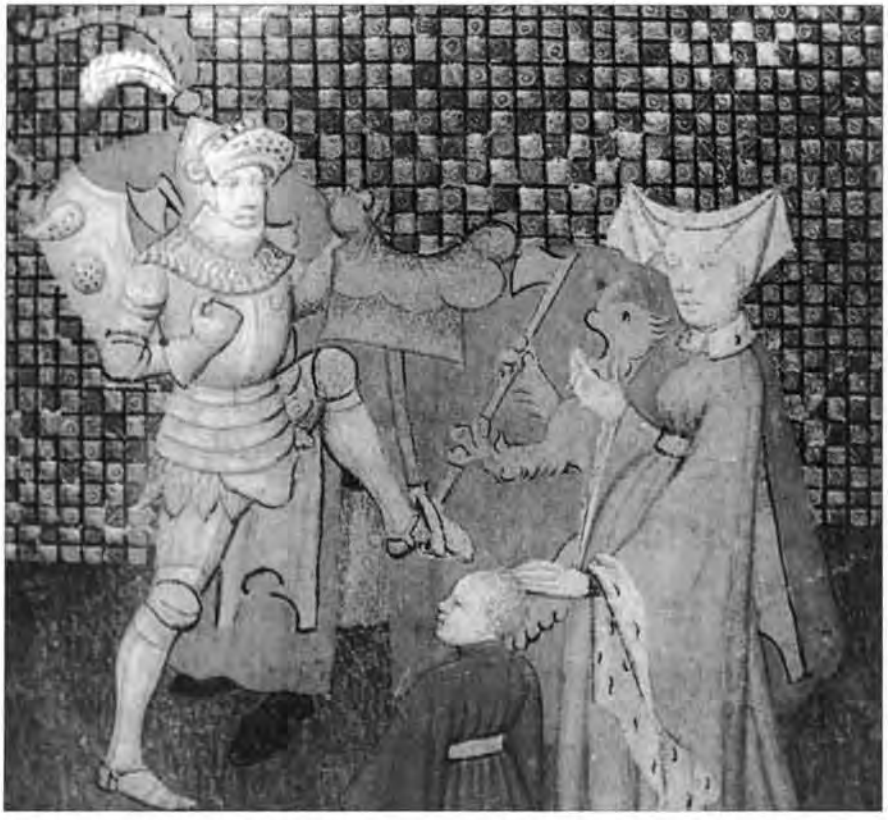
accompanied by a coutillier [squire] *equipped with a salade, harnois de jambes, haubergeon, jacque, brigandine or corset, armed with dagger, sword, and a vouge or demi-lance. Also a page or varlet with the same armour and one or two weapons. The archers wear leg armour, salets, heavy jacques lined with linen, or brigandines, bow in hand and quiver at side.'*

The 125 to 250 *livres tournois* which one young nobleman required to fully equip himself represented eight to 16 months' wages for an ordinary man-at-arms, and clearly applied to the best possible gear. Even ordinary equipment remained expensive. Salets were valued at between 3 and 4 *livres tournois*, a jaque, corset or brigandine at 11 *livres*. A full set of such armour and weaponry cost around 40 *livres* while the cost for a complete *lance* was from 70 to 80 *livres*.

At the other extreme the poor quality dagger used by most *francs archers* cost less than one *livre tournois*, a poor quality sword just over one *livre*. The same anonymous text of 1446 stated that '*there is also another manner of folk armed solely in haubergeons, salets, gauntlets and leg armour, who are wont to carry in the hand a sort of dart which has a broad head and is called a langue de boeuf* [ox-tongue].'

Crossbows continued to be manufactured in large quantities, the Clos de Galées making them in batches of 200 at a time. The volume of ammunition produced at the Clos de Galées was even greater; nevertheless, it only required ten beech trees and less than 250 kilos of iron to make 100,000 spinning crossbow bolts. The question of when steel-staved crossbows came into general use, rather than being merely a technological curiosity, is debateable, though some may have been used in warfare around 1370. Despite or perhaps because of growing competion from guns, the crossbow had evolved into an astonishingly powerful weapon combining great power with little weight, no recoil, and no necessity for long training. But while the use of steel made the crossbow narrower, less clumsy, and with a draw length of only 15 to 10 centimetres, it remained slow to load and increasingly complex. Its draw weight now demanded mechanical aids to spanning – the goat's-foot lever, the cranequin with a hand-cranked ratchet bar, and eventually a windlass with hooked cords and double crank-handles.

Cannon were used in greater numbers, and although there were few major technological changes there may have been experiments



A knight takes leave of his family, in an early 15th century French or English manuscript. He wears the full 'white armour' fashionable at the time of Agincourt, though his helmet is not yet of the fully developed 'great bascinet' form. Note that the chamfron on his horse's head includes ventilated iron elements covering its eyes and ears. (British Library, Ms. Harl. 4431, f.150, London)

with small single-discharge guns made of hardened leather. Nevertheless guns were increasingly accurate and reliable, capable of being aimed at very specific or even moving targets – such as boats trying to run supplies into a besieged fortress, or the masts of enemy ships at sea.

The making of guns also developed into a substantial business involving many different crafts and guilds. Only the richest manufacturers could concentrate all these skilled men in one place, and success in doing so may have been one reason why the Bureau brothers made such a significant contribution to French victories in the last decades of the Hundred Years War. In 1442, for example, Jean Bureau made for the French Royal artillery train: six bombards, 16 *veuglaires*, 20 *serpentines*, 40 *couleuvrines* and unnumbered *ribaudequins*, at a cost of 4,198 *livres tournois*. These guns required 20,000 pounds of gunpowder costing 2,200 livres tournois. King Charles VII clearly thought such expenditure worthwhile, since the Bureau brothers' artillery train conducted 60 successful sieges in 1449-50 alone.

The remarkable mid-15th century carvings on the front of the Stadhuis in Leuven are magnificent examples of late Gothic Flemish art made under the direction of Mathieu de Layens. This particular carving shows infantry attacking a fortification defended by men (left) using slings, perhaps to hurl grenades. (Author's photo)

TACTICS

Early campaigns: responses to defeat

The Hundred Years War largely consisted of sieges, *chevauchées* (large scale cross-country spoiling and looting raids) and naval raids, but was also punctuated by major pitched battles – indeed, the purpose of sieges and wasting raids was often to tempt the enemy into open battle at a disadvantage. This was particularly true of the first phase during which the English longbow earned its place in military history. In these early years the French rarely used infantry to protect the flanks of their cavalry, as did the English, and the evidence suggests that French commanders simply did not understand how to use large forces of crossbow-armed infantry.

Yet it was the failure of several massed charges by French armoured cavalry which was the greatest shock to men accustomed to the knights' domination of open battle. Such cavalry normally advanced knee to knee, in two or three ranks and probably at a walk, since trotting was virtually impossible for a fully armoured horseman. They would then spur into a canter for the final attack, anticipating that the psychological impact of such an armoured charge would break opposing infantry

even before they came into contact. But the English – sheltering behind or within a thicket of sharpened stakes, and capable of creating an arrow storm of tens of thousands of shafts in the moments before contact – did not break, and the results were disastrous. Horses would not impale themselves on a line of stakes, and although a barrage of falling arrows would not have killed many riders, it would have injured numerous horses. Falling, panicking, baulking or swerving horses would disrupt the close-packed cavalry *conrois* formation; at Crécy there is evidence that horses simply lay down in another natural reaction when an animal is hurt but unable to flee. Once a charge was stopped or broken close to enemy infantry the advantage rapidly shifted to nimble men on foot, who could attack the horses before turning on horsemen who had fallen to the ground.

French commanders reacted to these disasters rapidly, though the alternatives they tried did not always work. French men-at-arms dismounted to fight just like their English foes, and after Poitiers their commanders often ordered them to advance on foot in what were intended to be arrow-proof formations. This may first have been attempted at Nogent-sur-Seine in 1359, but even here the French men-at-arms were unable to turn the flanks of the opposing English archers, the battle only being won when French infantry *brigands* attacked from the rear. On the other hand, the initial French disasters did lead to a more cautious approach compared to the overconfidence of the early battles. This was even reflected in popular songs, one of which was in the form of advice for the king: *'O Philippe ... more valuable than iron, better than force used artfully, is prudence, superior to armies, enabling you to bring back spoils from the enemy.'*

French armies learned to avoid major confrontations and instead conducted a

The lord of St Floret kneels before the Virgin, attended by John the Baptist. In this detail from a wall painting the knight has a blue tabard bearing his arms of a gold lion with red tongue and claws. Beneath this his mail and plate armour are shown as entirely gilded. *(in situ* village church, St Floret; author's photo)

Another carving from the Stadhuis in Leuven portrays a fully armoured knight riding down a group of foot soldiers, perhaps representing the Duke of Burgundy defeating rebels from Gent. (Author's photo)

war of siege and countersiege. At first, of course, the French were largely on the defensive, and here the ability of towns and castles to defy the English was of paramount importance. Fortunately for France defence still held an advantage over offence in such warfare, and most major sieges were really intensified blockades. Here the main role of a defender's stone-throwing engines was to destroy the besieger's siege machines. During the defence of the castle of Bioule in 1346-47, for example, resistance was organised in a concentric manner: first the stone-throwing mangonels and cannon, then the larger 'two-feet' crossbows, then ordinary crossbowmen manning the walls, and finally men dropping rocks on the enemy by hand. On those occasions when French forces were on the offensive they, like the English, still relied on blockade, polluting a water supply, filling a defensive ditch, then approaching the wall with mobile towers or sheds to protect their miners. While besieging La Roche Darien in 1347 Charles of Blois had trees and hedges felled and drainage ditches filled to deny cover for English archers should they attempt a sortie.

Individual combat skills were also more sophisticated than was once thought, and by the time of the Hundred Years War a knight was no mere muscular thug relying solely on the strength of his sword-arm – nor did he indulge in the almost ritualised fencing seen in the 16th century. Instead his attitude towards close combat skills had much in common with modern commando training. Swordplay relied on both cut and thrust, while combat between horsemen armed with lances relied on what might be called the 'psychological edge'. The natural human tendency to look away shortly before impact was fully recognised, as was the need for constant practice and the selection of weapons suited to an individual's strength.

The middle years

During the second phase of the Hundred Years War the realities of warfare and the culture of chivalry clashed dramatically for the French *noblesse*. Whereas honour said that a challenge to battle should never be refused, recent bitter experience argued that it often should be. This led to tortured consciences and sleepless nights for many commanders. Though it was increasingly common for the men-at-arms to dismount to

CAVALRY 1337-1360

1: The Dauphin Charles, c.1356

2: Southern French squire, c.1340

3: Knight from the Dauphiné, c.1350

A

INFANTRY 1337-1360
1: Northern French militiaman, c.1340
2: Sergeant from Champagne, c.1360
3: Provençal mercenary crossbowman, c.1350
1
2
3

CAVALRY 1360-1415
1: Boucicault, c.1400
2: Guichard Dauphin, c.1410
3: Bertrand du Guesclin, c.1370
1
2
3

INFANTRY 1360-1415

1: Crossbowman, retinue of Jean de Hengest, c.1407

2: Rennes militiaman, c.1370

3: Southern French light infantryman, c.1400

D

NAVAL WARFARE 1337-1415

1: Jean de Béthencourt, c.1402

2: Basque sailor, c.1360

3: Castilian naval captain

CAVALRY 1415-1453
1: Jeanne d'Arc, c.1430
2: French knight, c.1440
3: Breton man-at-arms, c.1450
1
2
3

INFANTRY 1415-1453
1: Franc archer, Poitiers, c.1453
2: Insurgent, c.1440
3: Flemish mercenary, c.1430
1
2
3
Angus McBride

ARTILLERY 1430-1453
1: Gunner with ribaudequin, c.1435
2: Gunner's assistant, c.1440
3: Handgunner, c.1450
2
1
3

fight, the knightly ethos was still that of a horseman, and in fact the proportion of cavalry in French armies was increasing.

The campaigns still consisted largely of raids by land and sea, sieges and skirmishes in which archers and crossbowmen often took only a minor part. Battles were now on a very small scale, though a number of successes had a huge impact on French morale. Most actions were dominated by dismounted but fully armoured men-at-arms fighting with shortened spears and axes. Other battles focussed upon the control of strategic river crossings, or occurred when small mobile French forces attacked the rear of English columns at night, or when the garrison of a castle attempted to destroy a besieger's encampment.

Similar French tactics were seen at the battle of Roosebeke in 1382, which involved much larger forces – perhaps 50,000 on each side. Here rebels from Gent largely consisted of infantry militias, while the French faced them with dismounted men-at-arms and other infantry plus cavalry on the flanks. Believing that an all-out assault was their only hope, the Gent rebels launched a massive attack; but the French line held and the cavalry swung around to envelop the enemy, who were virtually wiped out.

More typical, however, were devastating English *chevauchée* raids across much of France. These were launched not only for their immediate rewards, but in the hope of drawing the French into the open battles which the French king and his commanders wanted to avoid. In fact the French garrisons generally resisted English taunts, but for the common people these *chevauchées* remained a nightmare. A song from the so-called Bayeux Chansonnier complained: *'In the Duchy of Normandy there is so much pillage that there one cannot have plenty. May God grant that the country of Normandy know peace.'*

ABOVE **14th century *bombard* from Lisieux Castle.**
BELOW **Late 14th century *veuglaire* with a separate breech, found in Lisieux Castle.**
(Both in the Historical Museum, Rouen)

The French solution: positional warfare

In the middle years of the 14th century the development of gunpowder artillery had not yet reached a stage giving attackers the automatic advantage in siege warfare; and guns could also be mounted in fortified places to return the attackers' fire. In response to English armies' relative domination of open field fighting the French king ordered an inventory of all fortified places in 1358 and 1367.

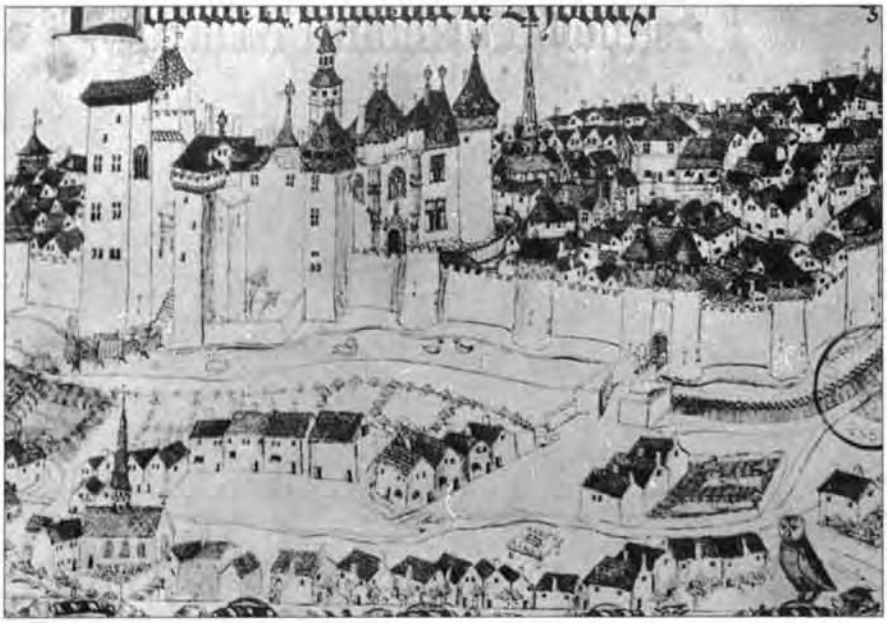
At the bottom end of the scale were the fortified churches which were particularly common in southern and western France. Other defences included *fortalesium* fortified villages, *hostal* or *valat* fortified houses, and *pals* which appear to have been linked houses or walls around a settlement. Similar terminology was used in the 15th century when a *castrum* could range from a proper castle to a fortified church or house, a *repayrium* being a habitation in a naturally defensible site, a *turris* or

tor being almost any form of tower, a *bastida* being a new village or town that need not be fortified, a *dongo* being the southern term for a *donjon* castle, a *borgada* being a fortified town or large village, and a *mota* probably being a place with a moat.

Fortified towns were, of course, the most important, and although their populations were periodically reduced by plague they were soon replenished by incomers from the countryside. Towns also co-operated closely with one another in defence, distribution of supplies and the sharing of information. They also posted early warning observers in the surrounding countryside in times of trouble, using smoke signals, bells, flags and other means of spreading the alarm. Rural villages appear to have done the same on a small scale, while feudal lords similarly exchanged information with urban authorities. The primary function of such arrangements was to obtain knowledge about troop movements and the activities of roving companies, and to find out who was and who was not prepared to pay the *pâtis* protection money demanded by armed bands. Information on enemy strengths and actions could be remarkably precise, as shown in surviving documents.

The decision to extend or update a town's fortifications was an important one. Although it could be very expensive, a reputation for 'impregnability' was good not only for deterrence but also for trade, and fortification was, in fact, seen as an investment. Once Royal approval was obtained the necessary land had to be compulsorily purchased, compensation paid for the destruction of houses and vineyards, lengthy legal processes completed, and special taxes called *festage* raised. Local manpower and materials would be used but outside experts could be recruited. People were also fully aware of the aesthetic aspects of new fortifications, since these reflected a town's status.

The higher nobility of France took responsibility for much modernisation of fortifications, including the adding of massive new gates to towns within their jurisdiction. They also tended to focus upon fortresses associated with the prestige of their own local dynasty; for example, the Duc de Berry not only strengthened his castle at Bourbon l'Archambault with massive towers but added a magnificent new banqueting hall – it was felt to be increasingly important for the aristocratic elite to maintain their status through conspicuous consumption.



'The City of Moulins' in a mid-15th century manuscript by Guillaume Revel. This intriguing illustration of a medieval city as it really looked includes the old town within its walls and a new citadel gate, as well as less crowded suburbs in the foreground. (Armourial d'Auvergne, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 22297, f.369, Paris)

Some detailed estimates of what was needed to defend such castles are found in the writings of Christine de Pisan in c.1408. She stated that a garrison of 200 men required 24 *arbaletes á tillole* (small crossbows), six *arbaletes á tour*,

24 *arbaletes á croc*, 20 bows, two or three *espringals*, 37,200 assorted crossbow bolts, arrows, etc., 72 spears, two *bricoles* (which may have been a form of *trebuchet*) and two *couillars* (perhaps another stone-throwing machine); 12 *cannons perriers*, 200 stones ready cut for these guns, 400 *tampons* with materials to make more again for the cannon, 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of gunpowder, and 3,000 pounds of lead for bullets.

She also listed what was needed to besiege such a place: 600 carpenters, 600 assistant carpenters, 2,000 pioneers, 330 assorted crossbows, 300 bows, 262,000 assorted arrows and crossbow bolts, etc, 400 war axes, four *engins volants* (perhaps stone-throwing engines or devices to help scale the walls), four *couillars*, 1,000 stones, 128 cannons, 1,170 stones for these cannons, 5,000 pounds of lead for bullets and 30,000 pounds of gunpowder. Preparations on this scale represented a massive expense in gold and time – less likely to be available to mobile attacking armies than to static resident garrisons.

When the much smaller castle of Montaillou was put into a state of readiness in July 1415, local men were expected to help the garrison of 32 soldiers. They were also expected to possess weaponry specified by the *sénéchal*. Most had cervellières or 'Genoese bascinets' but no body armour, though they did have small shields; all except one possessed swords. Some used crossbows while others were armed with *genetaires*, light javelins. Twenty or so other, perhaps more powerful crossbows were kept in the castle with their ammunition. The castle itself had a donjon or keep, where the châtelain lived, plus a lower courtyard and a barbican with lower walls. The dry moat had to be cleared and a redoubt was built outside the door of the donjon. The lower courtyard had a wooden wall and was defended by three towers, some roofed with stone slates called *lozes*, and each having a small cannon. The biggest tower also formed the entrance gate. The *sénéchal* now ordered that a wooden parapet or hoarding be added to the wall, while the entrance to the lower courtyard would be defended by additional walls forming a *chicane* to stop an enemy pushing a burning waggon against the wooden gate. Within the courtyard were *guérites*, raised wooden platforms to allow the garrison to survey the surrounding countryside and provide flanking fire. There were also several other buildings where the local inhabitants could live during a siege, and where people were expected to keep stocks of emergency food.

The same degree of care was put into offensive siege warfare. During prolonged sieges the French built fortified *bastide* 'new towns' facing the English-held positions. Sometimes these were of wood, sometimes of stone, in which case they might later be incorporated into a town's defences. Major sieges could certainly involve substantial forces, as in

A French tapestry made around 1460 illustrates *The Life of St Peter*. Heavily armoured infantrymen sleep in what may be a symbolic reference to the end of the Hundred Years War between France and England. (Musée de Cluny, Paris)

The Château de Couches, a small French castle typical of the later years of the Hundred Years War. It has 13th century walls to which a tall 15th century keep and chapel have been added. (Author's photograph)

1406 when the French attacked Calais with 3,400 men-at-arms, 710 carpenters for the siege engines, 1,860 pioneers to dig trenches or mines, 322 waggoneers and 49 gunners. The latter served 16 cannon from Bourges, three from Utrecht and others from Holland, Limburg, Brussels and Louvain, requiring 2,750 stone cannonballs and no less than 20,000 pounds of gunpowder.

Despite the steady increase and improvement in gunpowder artillery traditional missile-throwing machines continued to be used throughout the 14th century; a large *trebuchet* was transported all the way from La Réole to attack English-held Bergerac in 1377. Powerful frame-mounted siege crossbows were probably mounted on top of towers, rather than inside them, as was specified in at least one ordnance signed by the senior French siege engineer Huges de Cardaillac.

Skill at arms

It had never been true that medieval fighting men relied solely on brute force and ferocity. Skill with weapons remained essential for a 14th-15th century man-at-arms (though wrestling sometimes seems to have been beneath his dignity). Indeed the knightly hero of Antoine de la Sale's *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* was described as of slight build, lithe and light, athletic, strong and agile even in full armour, with rapid reactions. He used weapons with great dexterity and his riding skills enabled him to dodge and parry. Other sources indicate that the best sword-strokes were cut and reverse, though a knight should also be skilled at a downwards blow and thrust. On horseback the main target was an opponent's head, and control of a horse during the confusion of a melée was essential, so as not to tire the animal and so as to get into a good attacking position.

The skills required of soldiers during the last phase of the Hundred Years War remained much the same. Jean de Bueil did, however, now write that when fighting of foot it was best to use the lighest armour consistent with adequate protection. He advised his reader to pace himself, maintain his composure and gain a psychological advantage by demonstrating confidence; but De Bueil also warned that it was easy to get out of breath if one's visor was closed.

Less is known of the training and skills of common infantry, though in 1394 a law was passed in France banning all sports other than practice with longbows and crossbows. There seem to be no references to shooting competions with handguns in 15th century France, the earliest known competitions being in Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

Artillery

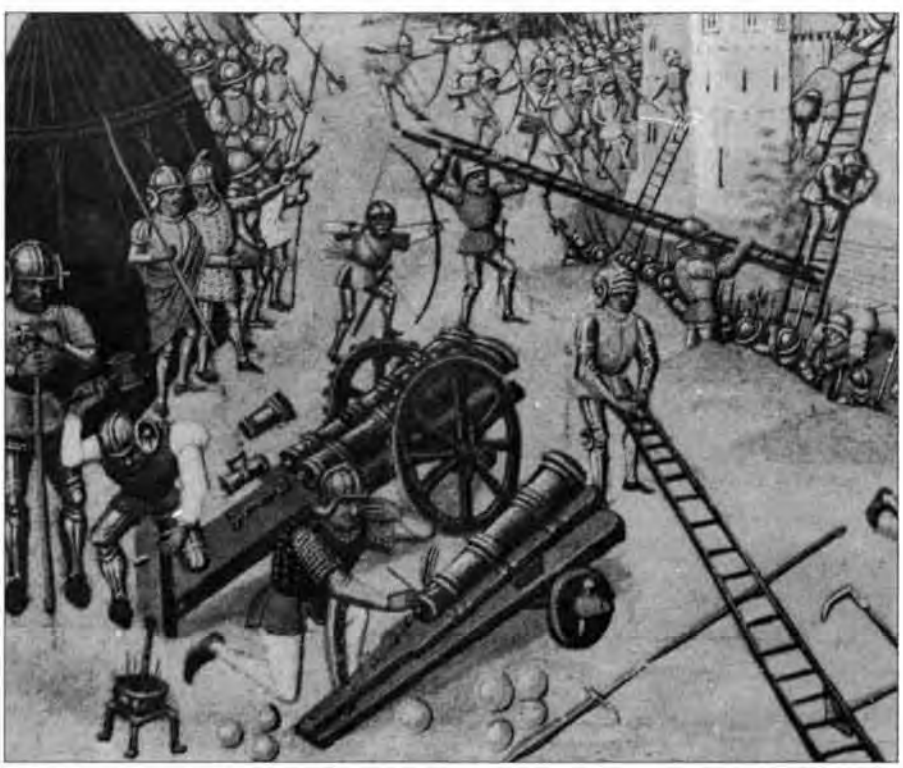
In the 14th century low accuracy, relatively light stone cannonballs and a slow rate of fire did not offer a very serious threat to major fortifications. However, professional gunners certainly developed a range of skills which enabled them to command high pay all over Europe. Not the least of these skills was the setting up of cannon, which were normally carried in waggons but fired from positions embedded in timber and earth. The loading of a late 14th or early 15th century muzzle-loading gun was a relatively long and complicated business; large quantities of loam had to be tamped or gas-tight tampons hammered into the barrel because cannonballs were such a poor fit. In the earliest days up to three-fifths of the barrel of a smaller gun might be filled with powder, while a tampon near the mouth enabled pressure to build up so that ball and tampon burst out of the gun more like a champagne cork than a projectile from a modern firearm. Because of these shortcomings, the turn of the 14th century saw a fashion for gigantism – massive bombards which made up in the weight of their shot what they lacked in accuracy or speed. Such weapons, and the means to transport them, were only available to the richest armies.

Artillery made considerable advances during the second quarter of the 15th century, however. Many cannon were now breech-loaders, with several removable breech chambers per gun which could be loaded in advance, thus increasing the rate of fire considerably. As the quality of gunpowder improved, iron cannonballs also provided a better fit, and longer barrels offered greater muzzle velocity and therefore accuracy with lower powder charges. Since guns did not now have to be cast on such a massive scale they were easier to transport, and period illustrations often show cannon being fired from wheeled carriages.

By the middle of the 15th century French manuscript painting was influenced by Renaissance art from Flanders, though it remained medieval in spirit. In this detail from a siege scene made around 1470 we can see large breech-loading cannon with separate breech-chambers, mounted on wheeled carriages; the further gun has two barrels. Such artillery was certainly available in the later stages of the Hundred Years War. (*Histoire de Charles Martel*, Bibliothèque Royale, Ms. 8, f.65v, Brussels)

The late campaigns

The mid-15th century saw a revival in the importance of infantry, and such troops included increasing numbers of handgunners. At the same time the French continued to rely on cavalry when the conditions seemed right. At Formigny in 1448 the French defeated a major English attempt to save what was left of their Norman possessions even though the enemy outnumbered them by up to two to one. The French also included a substantial contingent of mounted archers – who rode on the march, thus enabling them to cross country at the same speed



as the cavalry, but fought on foot. The English attempted an over-ambitious turning movement, which was broken up by a series of controlled cavalry charges backed up by mounted archers.

The battle of Castillon in 1453 was even more conclusive and was also typical of the period. Here the French built a fortified artillery park during their siege of Castillon. The English garrison came out in an attempt to destroy this field fortification, but were driven back with heavy losses, whereupon the French rearguard hit them in the flank and the English defeat became a route. In many ways this French victory was like Crécy in reverse, with the English choosing to attack a strong position defended, on this occasion, by guns rather than longbows.

Now the French were on the offensive they carried out several *chevauchées* themselves. It was, however, the seemingly endless series of French sieges of English-held cities, towns and castles which brought them final victory. Transport and supply had always been vital in siege warfare, but during the latter part of the Hundred Years War they were the focus of several particularly bitter clashes. For example, during the English siege of Meaux a French relief column secretly tried to carry supplies over the wall, but one man made a noise by dropping a box of salted herrings and alerted the English, who drove off the relief force.

Oddly, salted fish played an even more dramatic part in the so-called Battle of the Herrings in 1429, during operations to raise the English siege of Orléans. Here the English had erected several outlying *bastides* to blockade the city. The French attacked these positions in a sort of countersiege while also running supplies into Orléans. Each side tried to intercept the other's convoys, but on this occasion the English were forewarned, and turned their waggons full of salted herrings into a field fortification. The French attacked with insufficient numbers; the English counter-attacked and overwhelmed the French and their Scottish allies, who had dismounted and were thus unable to escape.

Raising the siege of Orléans is regarded as Jeanne d'Arc's greatest victory, and it certainly had a huge impact on French morale. In fact, the Maid's military career focussed on such sieges, many of which resulted in towns reopening their gates to King Charles now that French self-confidence had revived.

A mid- to late 14th century manuscript illustration of a naval battle. During the Hundred Years War naval clashes were resolved by boarding and hand-to-hand combat, though this was preceded by an exchange of archery. Efforts were also made to disable the enemy's rigging. (*Chroniques de St Denis*, British library, Ms. Roy. 20, C.VII, London)

NAVAL FORCES

During the 14th century the sea was an arena where the normal rules of war hardly applied. Most naval activity was in the English Channel, although there were also significant clashes in the storm-tossed Bay of Biscay. During the early 14th century fleets were not designed to oppose an enemy at sea. They were offensive rather than defensive, attacking enemy shores and commerce rather than attempting to defend their own shores. In fact most activity on the open seas was privateering, if not piracy, against individual or small groups of enemy vessels.

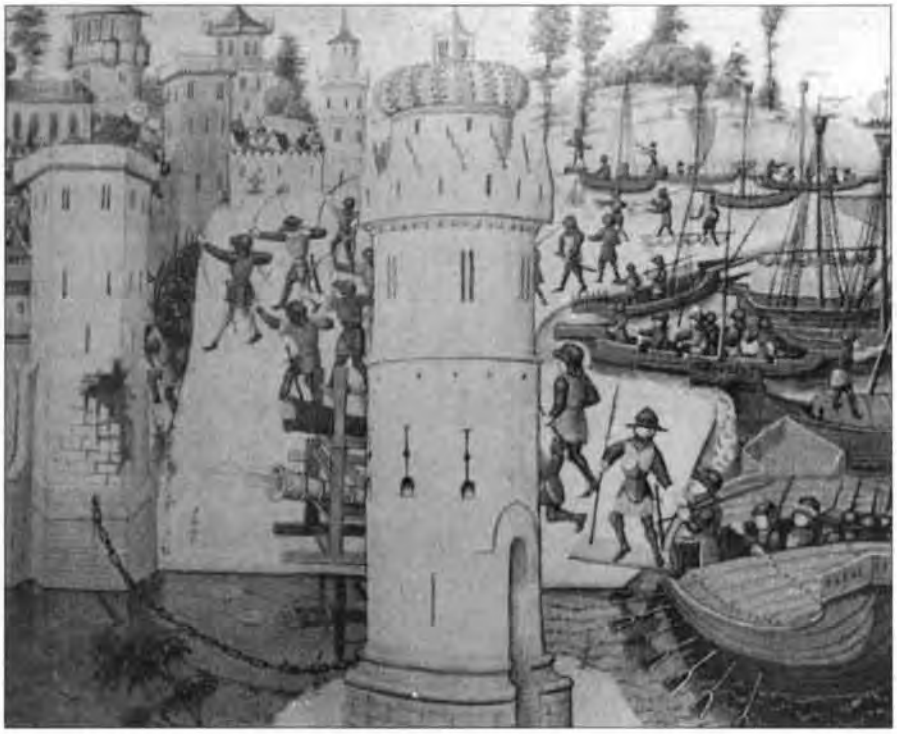
One of the ships of Jacques Coeur on a carved relief made between 1443 and 1451. It is a two-masted vessel with an armoured crew, two of whom occupy the crow's nest where they are supplied with spears and javelins. (Hôtel of Jacques Coeur, Bourges)

The most characteristic northern ship was the cog, a relatively high-sided vessel which gave greater protection and range to crossbowmen and archers manning wooden 'castles' at prow and stern. The French and their Castilian allies also used galleys, which were more powerful fighting ships but were vulnerable in rough northern seas. The famous Clos de Galées in Rouen built most types including the *batel, bateline, barge* and *coque* or cog. Normal naval armour and weaponry for a small *galiot* in the 1330s consisted of coats-of-plates, gambesons, targes and other forms of shields, bascinets, crossbows with their quarrels and spanning belt-hooks, and spears. A larger *nef* had the same equipment plus an unidentified *'garot'*; while a fighting galley also had helms and *chapeaux de Montauban* – brimmed helmets.

The astonishing records of the Clos de Galées show that in 1346-47 a Genoese galley called the *Sainte Marie* had a crew of 210 men. Her master was Crestien de Grimault and her officers consisted of one *comite*, one *souz comite* and a clerk; the rest of the crew consisted of crossbowmen and sailors. Just under ten years later another fleet or convoy assembled at Rouen, consisting of ten galleys, five large *barges* and three smaller *bargots* who were to take supplies to several coastal fortresses.

When opposing ships did meet at sea it was almost invariably by chance, their crews fighting with crossbows before attempting to board. Most crossbowmen and archers were stationed in the high fore- and stern-castles, from which they could shoot down upon the enemy crew and where, if necessary, they could make a final stand. Poor ship-to-ship communications meant that sailing in convoy was difficult, and it was almost impossible for warships to maintain station for fleet manoeuvers. As a result small fishing vessels could take on bulkier transports if they gained the weather gauge. When fleets clashed the result tended to be very decisive, with almost all the losing side's vessels being captured. By 1377 it was normal for fighting ships to have two large cannons firing lead shot, and thereafter the number of guns at sea increased steadily.

While the English launched long-range *chevauchées*, the French retaliated with a series of naval raids in which they and their Genoese or Castilian allies proved themselves particularly effective. Attacking ships could choose when and where to land; raids were launched against English coastal towns, with smaller incursions landing over open beaches. Successful raids were carried out on Portsmouth and the Isle of



'The Siege of Damietta' in a French manuscript made in 1462. It includes (foreground) what seems to be an armoured assault barge powered by oars. Similar river or lake warships appear in Swiss manuscripts of a few decades later. (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris)

Wight in 1338, Winchelsea in 1360, Portsmouth in 1369, several ports between Portsmouth and Rye in 1377, and Gravesend in 1380. French and Scottish ships also co-operated in harrassing English maritime communications in the North Sea and along the western seaboard.

The prevailing winds in the English Channel, and the orientation of harbours, generally denied the French a superiority sufficient to threaten English communications with their armies and possessions on French soil after the English naval victory of Sluys in June 1340 – and particularly after the English captured Calais in 1347. Nevertheless, France emerged as a major naval power in the later 14th and early 15th century. Amongst the most remarkable demonstrations was an expedition to conquer the Canary Islands led by Jean IV de Béthencourt in 1402. (A French merchant from Toulouse seems to have accompanied De Béthencourt, then crossed to the mainland of West Africa where he converted to Islam, married a local woman, and eventually made his way back to France via North Africa in 1413, still with his African wife.)

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The gilded copper statue of St Michael on top of the steeple of the Stadhuis in Brussels is almost invisible from the ground. It is, however, a remarkably accurate representation of the German-style armour used in Flanders and northern France in the mid-15th century. (Stadhuis, Brussels)

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King Charles VII of France and his elite Scottish guard on a panel painting by Jean Fouquet, made around 1450. The kneeling monarch is dressed for riding while his guardsmen have full armour, relatively light salets and decorative livery jackets. (*Adoration of the Magi*, Musée Condé, Paris)

THE PLATES

A: CAVALRY 1337-1360

A1: The Dauphin Charles, c.1356

Here the future King Charles V of France wears up-to-date and fashionable armour. This includes a 'houndskull' bascinet helmet with visor raised, its mail aventail secured round the edge by vervelles. Beneath a tight surcoat displaying, quarterly, the gold lilies on blue of 'France ancient' and a blue dolphin with red fins and tail on gold, the Dauphin has a coat-of-plates and a mail haubergeon. His arms are defended by full plate armour; his legs have a more elaborate system of scale-lined fabric cuisses for the thighs, domed poleyns over decoratively cut white leathers, splinted greaves and laminated sabatons. The prince's horse is also protected by a small amount of hardened leather armour. (Main sources: *Romance of Alexander*, Flemish manuscript, 1338-44, Bodleian Library, Ms. 264, Oxford; *Lancelot du Lac*, French manuscript, mid-14 cent., Bodleian Library, Ms. 21773, Oxford)

A2: Southern French squire, c.1340

In contrast this southerner has the old-fashioned armour still worn on both sides of the Pyrenean frontier. It consists of a 'great helm' with a hinged visor, mail coif, hauberk and chausses. In addition he has a thickly padded surcoat, padded gauntlets and iron greaves. The surcoat is fringed at hem and upper arm, and bears on upper arms, chest and back his arms of small red crosses on gold. His horse wears a caparison over a full mail bard, and a hardened leather chamfron. (Main sources: Effigy of a lord of Château de Bramevaque, early 14 cent., *in situ* Cloisters, Abbey Church of St Bertrand de Comminges; effigy of Bernard Comte de Comminges, early 14 cent., Musée des Augustins, Toulouse; *Story of Tristan*, French wall-paintings, mid-14 cent., *in situ* Templer Chapel, St Floret)

A3: Knight from the Dauphiné, c.1350

This knight from south-eastern France uses a style of arms and armour influenced by neighbouring Savoy. His bascinet has its visor removed and is covered with a layer of decorative cloth with a woven thread ornament at the apex. He wears a heraldic tabard open down both sides over a coat-of-plates covered with red fabric, and hardened leather shoulder pieces. Apart from hardened leather couters for his elbows and poleyns for his knees he otherwise relies on mail protection. The heraldic charges on his almost rectangular shield – note cut-out for lance – are heavily embossed into the leather covering as well as painted. (Main sources: Effigy of Count Tommaso II of Savoy, mid-14 cent., *in situ* Cathedral, Aosta)

B: INFANTRY 1337-1360

B1: Northern French militiaman, c.1340

The bulk of infantrymen in French armies were probably urban militias. This man is armoured for close combat, wearing a brimmed chapel-de-fer over a small bascinet with attached aventail. His body defences are a coat-of-plates over a mail hauberk, with hardened leather armour for his shoulders and upper arms, plate rondels strapped to the elbows, and splinted vambraces for his forearms. He is armed with a massive *vouge* polearm, a sword, a basilard dagger and a large shield. (Main sources: Statue of an armed guard of the Gent militia, Flemish c.1340, Stonework Museum, Gent; 19 cent. reproduction of lost 14 cent. wall-paintings from Leugemetefries, Flemish 1346, Bijlokemuseum, Gent)

B2: Infantry sergeant from Champagne, c.1360

Regions close to the border between French and Imperial territory were influenced by both areas. Hence this professional foot soldier's coat-of-plates would be typical of the Rhineland and Flanders, like his leg and arm defences. His long-shafted *gisarme* polearm, single-edged falchion sword, simple helmet and large infantry shield could, however, be found across most of the country. The brass rivets and washers on the exterior of the upper part only of his coat-of-plates show that the skirt section is of fabric alone; note the thong, pin and loop fastening at the shoulders, and the white cross of France stitched to the breast. Beneath it he wears a mail hauberk and a coif, a padded gambeson, leather rerebraces on the upper arms and chausses on the thighs, plate poleyns and splinted greaves. He carries one of his large

'The Knights of Christ' on a painted alterback by Jan van Eyck, c.1435. The detail of armour and horse harness in this magnificent example of Flemish early Renaissance art is remarkable, while the armour itself appears to be a mixture of German and French styles. (*in situ* Church of St Bavon, Gent)

plated leather gauntlets in his simple cervellière. (Main sources: ivory box, French c.1340, Hermitage, St Petersburg; effigy from Pont-aux-Dames, c.1335, Louvre, Paris; Crucifixion, Franco-German alabaster carving c.1350, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York)

B3: Provençal mercenary crossbowman, c.1350
Many crossbowmen were recruited from Provençe – which lay outside the frontiers of France – and detailed desriptions of their equipment survive. Such a soldier has a tall chapel-de-fer forged from one piece; a mail coif worn inside the top of his hauberk, over a thickly quilted aketon; an oblong leather buckler is strapped to his left arm. His weapons are a sword, a large basilard dagger, and three composite crossbows carried slung on the pack on his back. The box on his wheelbarrow probably contains crossbow bolts. (Main sources: *Chroniques de France*, French manuscript, mid-14 cent., British Library, Ms. Roy. C.VII, London; Polyptych of the Passion by Simone Martini, painted in Avignon c.1340, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp)

C: CAVALRY 1360-1415

C1: Boucicault, c.1400
Jean de Maingre (c.1366-1421), called 'Boucicault', eventually became Marshal of France like his father before him. A champion of the tourney and a Crusader against the Turks on land and sea, he was captured at Agincourt and was one of the few noblemen whose life was spared; he died in English captivity six years later. In his younger days he maintained a rigorous fitness routine which enabled him to perform stunts such as climbing up the back of a ladder in full armour, using only his hands. Here this enables us to see the back of his bascinet, aventail, and heraldic 'coat armour', as well as his typical plate leg armour. Note the strap attaching his aventail through a slit in the coat armour to the iron cuirass beneath; this is worn over a mail haubergeon. His belt, with thick gilded plates, supports a rondel dagger; the rigid cuirass beneath prevents the low-slung belt from slipping down. (Main sources: *Les Belles Heures de Duc de Berry*, French manuscript, c.1405, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *Chroniques de St Denis*, French manuscript, late 14 cent., British Library, Ms. Roy. 20, C.VIII, London; *The Apocalypse*, French tapestry, c.1375, Castle Museum, Angers)

C2: Guichard Dauphin, c.1410
Towards the end of the 14th century a bascinet with a rounded visor came into fashion, as did a rigid iron bevor to protect the throat. Here Guichard Dauphin has a fabric-covered brigandine with very large chest plates over a mail haubergeon – note the iron lance-rest on the right breast. His mail aventail is covered with blue fabric bearing small heraldic shields – quarterly, blue dolphins on gold, and two silver diagonals on a blue ground, with a triple red label overall. His shield is of the oval variety used on foot, with a

An illustration from a primitive mid-15th century Flemish manuscript shows similar armour, though in a much cruder style. (*Legend of Troy*, Bibliothèque Royale, Ms. 9240, f.63v, Brussels)

OPPOSITE **Few pieces of 15th century clothing survive, but this French heraldic tabard is one. It bears a white cross *contre-bretessé* on a red ground. (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg)**

substantial wooden grip and padded leather squab; he would be armed with a shortened spear for infantry combat. (Main sources: late 14 cent. French effigies, in 18th century engraving by Gaignièrs, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Est. Rés. Pe 1, Paris; *Chronicles of Froissart*, French manuscript, early 15 cent., Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 865, Besançon)

C3: Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France, c.1370

Du Guesclin was a short, muscular man with a battered prize-fighter's face; see the illustration on page 17. As Constable he would have had the finest equipment available, here consisting of a tall bascinet with a very pointed 'houndskull' visor. The aventail is attached in the normal manner and has its own thickly padded lining. His thickly quilted jupon is worn over a cuirass, which is not visible here, with plate gauntlets and full leg-harness. Several parts of this armour are also gilded. Du Guesclin's arms are displayed as small embroidered shields on his jupon and on his horse caparison. The horse's chamfron is covered with black fabric with gold braid decoration, and has fabric 'sleeves' over the ears. His sword has a hand-and-a-half hilt. (Main sources: *Du Guesclin Chronicles*, French manuscript late 14 cent., Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; St George, Burgundian carving by Jacques de Baerze, late 14 cent., Musé Historique, Dijon)

D: INFANTRY 1360-1415

D1: Crossbowman in the retinue of Jean de Hengest, c.1407

In addition to carrying a pavise shield with the arms of Jean de Hengest, Master of the Crossbowmen of France, plus those of 'France modern', this man has a lead badge in the form of a sprig of broom sewn to the left breast of his quilted pourpoint. Such badges of political affiliation were characteristic of later 14th century France. The pourpoint is worn over a brigandine and a mail haubergeon, and the coif worn under his kettle-hat is thickly padded; quilted cuisses

overlap the plate lower leg defences; and single iron plates are strapped to the backs of his mail-faced gauntlets. He is armed with a powerful steel crossbow – note wolfskin-covered quiver of bolts, and broad belt with spanning hooks; a broad thrusting sword (obscured here, on his left hip); and a basilard. (Main sources: *Livre de Chasse*, French manuscript, early 15 cent., Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 616, Paris; sword, mid. 14 cent., Cathedral Museum, Chartres; pourpoint of Charles de Blois, c.1370, Musée des Tissus, Lyon)

D2: Militiaman from Rennes, c.1370

This urban foot soldier could have found himself fighting for either side, while his equipment illustrates the fact that arms and armour travelled over great distances as arms merchants sought customers wherever there was conflict. The scale-covered aventail might be English, his winged mace Italian or southern French, his hardened leather limb defences Flemish, his mail haubergeon and chausses from anywhere in France. (Main sources: helmet, Milanese, c.1350-70, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, no. 2598, Milan; clerestory windows, mid-14 cent., *in situ* Abbey Church, Tewksbury; funerary plaque of Gilles de Hamel, c.1355, *in situ* church, Heeren-Elderen)

D3: Southern French light infantryman, c.1400

At first the term *brigand* referred to soldiers or mercenaries protected only by scale-lined, cloth-covered brigandines as worn here; note the attached mail cap sleeves. This man also has a light bascinet, worn over his fabric hood with a long liripipe; a mail collière around his neck and shoulders, and a mail haubergeon; and would have worn plated gauntlets. He also carries a small round buckler. His weapons are a slender thrusting sword and a new style of rondel dagger. (Main sources: Crucifixion from the *Parement de Narbonne*, painted altar hanging, French, c.1375, Louvre Museum, Paris; *Martyrdom of St George*, Italian wall painting, c.1380, *in situ* Oratorio di San Giorgio, Padua)

E: NAVAL WARFARE 1337-1415

E1: Jean de Béthencourt, c.1402

Jean de Béthencourt is shown during the complicated process of putting on full armour, a task which required the help of another man. He already wears his off-white quilted arming coat – a garment which would later be further developed, having small pieces of mail attached at the vulnerable points (armpit, groin, etc) so that the mail haubergeon which De Béthencourt holds here could be abandoned. His hose are laced to the arming coat at the hips; his armour and shield await him – note thickly embossed blazon on the leather-covered shield. (Main sources: *Livre des Nobles Femmes*, French manuscript late 14 cent., Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; breastplate, Milanese, late 14 cent., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

E2: Basque sailor, c.1360

The costume worn in northern Spain and south-western France differed from that seen further north. This seaman, helping button the tabs down the front of the knight's arming coat, wears a round cervellière with the decorated rim favoured in northern Spain, plus a mail coif with small eye holes – another characteristic fashion of Castile. His sleeveless, quilted jerkin may have been more of a Catalan or

Aragonese fashion; note the wooden buttons down the front and coloured woollen fringes at hem and shoulders. A broad 'cummerbund', here interpreted as rawhide, would be worn by Mediterrean sailors as late as the 18th century. His shirt sleeves are rolled up; obscured here, he would wear his white woollen hose rolled down below the knees and secured there by laces. His weapon is an iron polearm; the purpose of the hooked fitment on his convex shield is unknown. (Main sources: *The Betrayal*, Aragonese wall painting, mid-14 cent., *in situ* church, Urries, Saragossa; *Crucifixion*, painted retable by Jaime Serra, Catalan, mid-14 cent., Museu Episcopal, Vic; *Arrest of Jesus*, Navarrese carving, mid-14 cent., *in situ* Cathedral, Pamplona)

E3: Castilian naval captain

Castilian military equipment had various distinctive features such as a preference for light armour, much of it of hardened leather reflecting a residual Arab-Islamic heritage. Here the captain wears such hardened leather leg armour over mail chausses, which were probably suited to naval warfare. His coat-of-plates has a high collar; and a yellow fabric lining with braided edges, extended at the arms and skirt and incorporating internal leather upper arm defences. (Main sources: *Crucifixion*, painted retable by Jaime Serra, Catalan, mid-14 cent., Museu Episcopal, Vic; *Arrest of Jesus*, Navarrese carving, mid-14 cent., *in situ* Cathedral, Pamplona)

F: CAVALRY 1415-1435

F1: Jeanne d'Arc, c.1430

Joan of Arc was undoubtedly an inspirational leader, though it was her less inspiring male colleagues who provided the military know-how. Here Ste Jeanne is shown wearing typical middle-class women's costume, with her hair loose and uncovered – this marked the virginal status of 'The Maid' – plus a sword at her side. The banner carried by the Breton man-at-arms in the background is based on a small drawing of Jeanne made during her lifetime, while her shield is said to be based on written descriptions. (Main source: drawing of Jeanne d'Arc on the Registre du Conseil du Parlement de Paris, 10 Mai 1429, Archives Nationales, Paris)

F2: French knight, c.1440

This rather gorgeously appointed knight – demonstrating his wealth by his fashionable pearl-strewn fur and velvet hat, and his courtly accomplishments by his musical skills – wears a tabard bearing the arms of Guillaume de Flavy, the Captain of Compiègne, who fought at Jeanne's side. He also wears a surcoat with puffed sleeves repeating his arms, over his full plate armour, and his 'great bascinet' stands ready at his feet. His 'ballock' dagger is visible at his hip; for close foot combat he would also be armed with his sword and a poleaxe. (Main sources: great bascinet, Burgundian c.1430, Navarre Museum, Pamplona; St Maurice, French statue from the Tarrasque Alter, c.1460, *in situ* Cathedral, Aix-en-Provençe; statue of a knight, French mid-15 cent., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

F3: Breton man-at-arms, c.1450

By the middle of the 15th century most knights had abandoned their surcoats; but some pictures show men wearing what could be described as 'national insignia', in this instance consisting of cloth cut in a kind of inverted T-shape and bearing the black cross of Brittany. His armour consists of a visored salet with a plate bevor, the red feather plume attached to a gilded holder at the top of the visor; a full cuirass in Italian style, plus plate arm and leg defences – note decoration with gilded rivets. By this date his horse has no armour. (Main sources: statue of Dunois, c.1450, *in situ* Castle Chapel, Châteaudun; *Cronicques et ystores des Bretons*, French manuscript mid-15 cent., Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 8266, Paris)

G: INFANTRY 1415-1453

G1: Franc archer from Poitiers, c.1453

Surviving documents indicate that *francs archers* – 'free archers' – often wore the arms of their own city, though few would have been as spendidly attired as this man. Each archer was to provide his own arms, armour and clothing unless he was so poor that he needed help from neighbours. This longbowman would therefore seem to be from the increasingly prosperous urban middle class. His salet has a blue cloth covering and much gilded decoration. The arms of Poitiers are applied to his quilted pourpoint (which is laced down the sides), and the black and yellow colours are repeated in strips on the quilted chausses worn with plate leg

This little drawing in the margin of a record of the *Conseil du Parlement de Paris*, dated 10 May 1429, is the only known picture of Jeanne d'Arc made during her lifetime. (Archives Nationales, Paris)

Towards the end of the Hundred Years War firearms begin to appear regularly in French art. This mid-15th century Flemish tapestry entitled the *Apocalyptic Siege of Jerusalem* shows a two-man team firing a handgun. One soldier holds the pole stock on top of his shoulder with both hands and takes aim, while the other leans in to bring the match to the touchhole – and also seems to be bracing his comrade from behind against the coming recoil. Both have visored salets with extra side plates, and substantial shoulder, upper arm and torso armour. (Castle Museum, Saumur)

defences. He carries an arrow bag behind his right hip, and is armed with a heavy falchion. (Main sources: *Life of St Peter*, French tapestry, mid-15 cent., Musée de Cluny, Paris; Flemish carvings, mid-15 cent., *in situ* Hotel de Ville Louvain)

G2: Insurgent, c.1440

Here a man in peasant costume (partly tucked up into his sash for ease of movement) is armed with a longbow – a weapon clearly not limited to the English. He also has a sturdy dagger, a leather water flask carried in a leather net, and a sheaf of arrows thrust into the back of his sash. Bagpipes are shown in several French manuscripts. (Main sources: *Les Belles Heures de Duc de Berry*, French manuscript, c.1405, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *Grandes Heures of Anne of Brittany*, French manuscript, late 15 cent, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Lat. 9474, Paris)

G3: Flemish mercenary, c.1430

This man is traditionally equipped as a heavily armoured infantryman. He has a massive chapel-de-fer helmet; an early form of scale-lined, canvas-covered jacque, which laced down both sides, worn over a mail haubergeon; and some plate armour for his arms and legs. In addition to a round buckler and relatively short sword he carries a *langue-de-boeuf* polearm. (Main sources: helmet and langue-de-beouf, French 15 cent., Musée de l'Armée, Paris; *Crucifixion*, panel painting by Jan van Eyck, Flemish c.1425-30, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

H: ARTILLERY 1430-1453

H1: Gunner with ribaudequin, c.1435

Artillery was an aspect of 15th century warfare in which the French outstripped their English opponents. Here a master-gunner prepares to fire a multi-barrelled ribaudequin. Despite many references to such guns in the 14th and 15th centuries they remain something of a mystery. Originally the term referred to a light cart, to which a number of small gunbarrels were later added; they were probably fired in rapid succession producing a rippling fire, and were clearly anti-personnel weapons rather than wall-battering pieces. The gunner himself is heavily armoured with mail and plate because of his exposed position, valued status and relative wealth. (Main source: *The Three Maries at the Tomb*, panel painting by Hubert van Eyck, c.1430, Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam)

H2: Gunner's assistant, c.1440

The assistant, pulling the mantlet open to allow the gun to fire, has been given here the costume of a working man since his task was essentially that of a labourer: a doublet and hose laced together over a shirt, canvas leggings, an apron, and a substantial belt knife as his only weapon. His visored salet is his only armour. (Main sources: *Les Échecs Amoureux*, French manuscript, 15 cent., Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 143, Paris; salet, French c.1440, Musée de l'Armée, Paris)

H3: Handgunner, c.1450

This gunner wears a deep chapel-de-fer with an eye-slit in the brim, though it is pushed back here for better visibility. Substantial pauldrons protect his shoulders and upper arms while the plackart and fauld from an Italian cuirass cover part of his brigandine, itself worn over a mail haubergeon. The quillons of his sword have a ring fitting to protect his fore-finger when fencing in the new 'Italian' manner. He is about to fire his weapon with a length of smouldering slowmatch; his powder flask, bullet bag and scouring stick would lie close by when in combat and would be carried slung when on the march. (Main sources: St Michael, panel painting by Bernardo Martorell, Catan c.1440, Museu Diocesà, Tarragona; *Life of St Sirmin* on the Tomb of Bishop Ferry de Beauvoir, French carving, late 15 cent., *in situ* Cathedral, Amiens)

Detail from Flemish illustration of soldiers sacking a captured city, made around 1460. It not only shows their salets, brigandines and minimal leg defences, but also that while some are clean-shaven others wear moustaches and short beards. The assorted booty is being carried off in baskets, chests, sacks and bundles; it includes jugs, bottles and cooking utensils. Note the wheelbarrow in the foreground, pushed with the aid of a shoulder rope – see Plate B3. (*Chroniques de France*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 2466, Paris)

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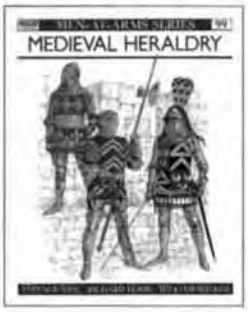

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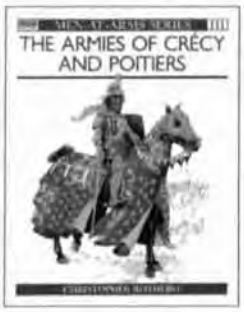

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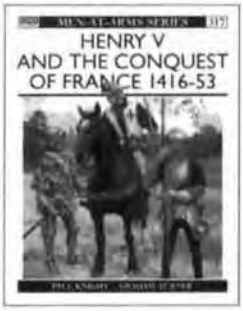

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